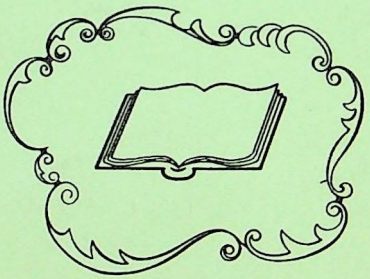
88-D-cons CONSULTATION ON THE INTERNAL UNITY OF Christian Churches

Consultation

ON

Internal Unity



OF

Christian Churches

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FOREWORD

As a result of the Unity Consultation at Phillips University sponsored by Council on Christian Unity, there developed a desire to have a somewhat similar Consultation dealing with the Internal Unity of Christian Churches. It was felt that a meeting to explore the basic viewpoints and differences within our own Movement would prove beneficial to all concerned. James B. Carr wrote several men about this possibility. He was encouraged enough to call several men together at Wichita to serve as a Planning Committee to inaugurate and plan such a Consultation.

The Consultation convened on June 2 in the auditorium of Friends University, Wichita, Kansas. Over 200 people were in attendance at the various sessions. Following various addresses the group was divided into ten discussion groups to discuss various issues and problems that seem to divide our Movement. One June 3, these discussion groups made reports through their chairmen. There followed two summations, one by a "cooperative," the other by an "independent."

This small booklet is a report of the addresses, discussion group reports and summations. The Planning Committee sends it forth in the hope that such communication as was witnessed at the Consultation and as will be perpetuated through the printed page will create understanding, mutual concern, and a manifestation of our unity in Christ.

CHARLES R. GRESHAM
Editor in behalf of the
Planning Committee

Manhattan Bible College Library
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ORDER OF ARTICLES

Major Addresses:

"The Nature of The Church"

"Our Agreements"

"Our Agreements"

"Our Disagreements"

"Our Disagreements"

Discussion Group Reports:

"The Authority of The Scriptures"

"The New Testament Church as a Pattern"

"Unity and or Restoration"

"In Faith, Unity"

"In Opinions, Liberty"

"Local Church Autonomy"

"Is Cooperation Essential to Unity"

"The Place of Conventions and Other Organizations"

"Denomination or Movement"

"Open Membership"

Summations:

"Summation For The Independents"

"Summation For The Cooperatives"

"The Nature of The Church"

Lester Rickman

Please accept my sincere appreciation for the invitation and the opportunity to be a part of this conference. The request that I speak on The Nature of The Church makes this responsibility more appealing as this is a subject about which I have much concern. But I must hasten to add that in fairness to you I must admit severe limitations. One cannot cover twenty centuries of Christian history in one address. Furthermore, I am not a scholar though I attempt to acquaint myself with the contributions of scholars. We are primarily concerned here with the viewpoints of the members of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ). When one gives leadership to reorganization within his state, is serving on committees which deal with effective organization, and is frequently called for counsel in local congregations regarding The Nature Of The Church and organization, it is of consequence what guides him. As you know your view depends on your viewpoint.

An interesting and very human story to be found in the Book of Numbers is that in which King Balak attempted to get Balaam to curse Balak's enemies. When Balaam refused to curse and denounce Israel, Balak thought it was because Balaam saw the people in such large numbers. Therefore, Balak said to Balaam, "Come with me to another place, from which you may see them; you shall see only the nearest of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there." Balak thought if he could change Balaam's view point, he could change his mind. It is possible for us to purposely or unconsciously stand where the view is confined by limited view points. We must seek the best view points from which to stand. For whatever it is worth and for your information I went to an independent Bible College in Denver (no longer in existance), Texas Christian University and Brite College of the Bible in Fort Worth, and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

I have been involved in discussions with all kinds of groups. This is not to blame one group more than another. It is to say that when some discussions were concluded in which unkind accusations had been made, in which tensions ran very high, in which men got each other told, and release didn't come in the most Christian way, I felt the need of a spiritual bath.

I cannot refrain from telling the experience of a preacher friend of mine who does not have many years ahead of him. The story has been changed enough so as to not give away any secrets. In one of his first pastorates there was

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a male member who every year at the annual meeting of the congregation abused everybody in order to get his way. When the annual meeting was approaching my preacher friend went to the chairman of his board and told him something had to be done about this as people would not continue to come if they were to be subjected to continual abuse. My friend left the chairman knowing that something would be done but he did not know what. The night of the meeting following the dinner when the business was about to begin, an elderly maiden lady whom everybody loved and called Aunt Jane rose and said, "Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion." When her request was granted she said, "I move that Mr. Jones be permitted to have his fit now and get it over with so we can get on with our business meeting." The motion received a second and was carried.

Most of us have left meetings in which our feelings must have been like the disciples, suspicious and jealous of one another.

> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:3-9 RSV)

But Jesus also said,

> By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.(John 13:35 RSV)

I have left such meetings not seeing how we could go on unless the good Lord found a way to cleanse us.

I have tried to reflect why we are the way we are when we belong to the church and want, we think, to do the will of Christ. How did we get this way? We have grown up like Topsy and formed organizations and institutions, sometimes doing that which was expedient, without any reference as to The Nature Of The Church or the use of New Testament or current definitions of the church such as "the church is the body of Christ," or that "we are the church." We have done

this sometimes because elected leaders were determined to keep anything from happening.

This has been an illness amongst us. This is reflected in ministers who return to former pastorates to officiate at weddings and funerals sometimes without letting the located pastor know about such. To make matters worse, some cultivate and seek such. This happens because men and women, ministers and lay people, do not understand The Nature of The Church. Otherwise, lay people wouldn't request it and pastors would not return to former congregations competing with the present pastors.

Negotiations with other religious bodies about possible mergers are almost at a standstill because we lack a common concept of The Nature of The Church. Within the periphery of my experience I have run into those both in the local congregation and without who have thought that in matters effecting the life or work of all the church was nobody else's business because the legal decision and voting remained with the board.

There has been a breakdown in society when men who call themselves churchmen believe The Nature of The Church is such that they can steal and the church has no right to speak about business affairs.

Recently, when talking about the way work is carried on in a certain state, the lady, who is a friend of mine, couldn'nt see why I should be disturbed. Her answer was "it works." Should points of conflict and tension arise, staff members would attempt to iron these out. But suppose the staff cannot! Organization should be such that the employers determine ahead of time what is the program.

When I discussed with an elder of one of our well known churches what appears to be the practice of flagrant plagiarism on the part of his minister, he said to me: "yes, but he is getting the job done.

In these cases there was no clear picture of The Nature of The Church as is revealed by the nature of the answers given.

We sometimes believe that because we have legal autonomy that we are independent, not dependent, when the truth of the matter is we are interdependent.

The scriptures which we use are made available because scholars belonging to many religious bodies have made them

accessible. The hymns which we sing in a service of worship on any given Lord's Day usually come from many sources. If we do not believe God is using these other religious bodies then we ought to refuse to sing, "Faith of Our Fathers," "Rock of Ages", "Love Divine," "Holy, Holy, Holy," "God of Grace and God of Glory," "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," and others.

A decade ago one person out of every five changed his place of residence every year and now it is almost one person out of every three. This means the persons who now make up the membership of our churches have come from many places.

A local congregation is what it is because others have been loyal to Jesus Christ. Seldom, if ever, does a church have a minister one of its own whom the church has recruited and trained. Our church school and other auxiliary literature is made possible by many. We are "interdependent."

Any organization or persons, including the church, is judged not only by what it does, but by what it is.

One of the definitions of the church to be found in The New Testament is, "the church is the body of Christ." Another description is:

> Fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for the dwelling place of God in the spirit.

In spite of the divisions and the people in it, Thomas Campbell in 1809 declared, "The Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one." One of the many modern definitions is, "we are the church."

It was the belief of the early church that God had done that in Jesus as a fulfillment of His purpose which is indicated in Matthew where Jesus is quoted as saying: "I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."

It is my understanding the early church did not have a building for the first three hundred years. Yet, there was the church. I commend for your reading the paper prepared for the Panel of Scholars and which appeared in the April 1959 issue of "The College of the Quarterly" entitled "Church

Organization In The New Testament" by Dwight E. Stevenson, In this he writes, "Thousands of disciples at Jerusalem met in family groupings at numerous private homes to celebrate their distinctive fellowship (Acts 2:47; 5:11). But these fellowships were not separate churches. All of them together constituted the church in Jerusalem. Members were conscious of a unity that embraced all the brethren."

What is of first importance? This is a question all must answer. The early disciples had difficulty as is revealed by their question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Desirable but not the most important. The answer of Jesus was, "When the Holy Spirit is come upon you, you shall receive power and you shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth."

The early church had to decide to keep its true nature before it launched out. When a benevolent need arose, for which they had not organized, recognizing the need must be met, the apostles nevertheless said: "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables ... we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." It was not that they thought they were too good to wait on tables. They recognized there was no substitute for worship. Bread was not a substitute for the bread of life. Annanias and Saphira were not permitted to prostitute this fellowship.

The early church was composed of persons who had accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As a result they found themselves in a fellowship which gave them their sense of mission. They did not create this fellowship but loyalty to Christ did.

It was The Nature of The Church to have a concern for persons, all kinds of persons, the who-so-ever-wills, who would not only clutch for freedom but would also be responsible members of society.

I quote at length from a book which has not yet received the acceptance which it deserves, Dwight E. Stevenson, Faith Takes a Name (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954) pp. 156-159.

> As members of the body of Christ, Christians are different from one another, as hands and feet are different, or eyes and ears. Each has his unique capacities which are God-given and which call him to the self-respecting service which he alone can render to God and humanity. In the Christian society there is room--even a demand--for individuals.

The Christian movement began with a core of leaders who were ruggedly individualistic, What a heterogeneous group the twelve disciples were : Here; at the very spearhead of our history, says Dr. William Robinson, we find a band made up of "A 'collaborator'" and an extreme nationalist, together with one who approximated an anarchist; of fishermen; of the well-to-do owner class and of the workman class; Of a scientific- minded unbeliever like Thomas and a guileless innocent like Nathanael." And in the earliest church, how different was Paul from James the brother of Jesus, and Peter from John.

To expand the circle, consider the Pentecostal crowd from whom Christianity won its earliest converts. Hear Luke tell it: There came together on this birthday of the church "devout men from every nation under Heaven...Galileans ...Parithians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopatamia, Judia, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia belong to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes." Think of the cultural contrasts, the linguistic differences, the recial varieties. This is a good lesson for a white, Anglo-Saxon middle-class congregation to ponder. When Paul called the roll of His church, he found no such colorless uniformity, his census included Greek and Jew, circumcized and uncircumcized, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man.... male and female, rich and poor, noble and low-born, learned and unschooled.

But, let us not be misled. We derive the right and the mandate to be different not from our individual separateness, but from our belonging... in separateness we lose our identity, but in membership we find it. "For the body does not consist of one member but of many."....Genuine organic unity encourages and thrives upon individual differences.

Near the end of the first century the writer of the Gospel of John quotes Jesus as saying: "And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10-16)

Baptist, Methodists, Presbyterians and others belong to this "other fold." We can be grateful that God has never waited until any religious body, including our own, became

perfect before he used it. If God is not too good to work with these people, then we had better not act as if we were better than God by refusing to work with them. We had better work with them also.

THE NATURE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

In the New Testament the words which refer to laity and clergy always refer to the same people. Every member was minister, a witness. This gets into the area of what we call the Priesthood of All Believers. It was quite a shock I received when I learned the Priesthood of all Believers meant more than that I had direct access to God, and that every member was his brother's priest.

To be sure there were differences in endowment and capacities, but functions, not authority, were assigned to elders, deacons, apostles, evangelists, etc. In response to the criticism that Hellenist widows were being neglected, not forgetting the necessity for prayer and preaching, seven men Full of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to see that the church cared for their needs. This word appointed bothered me until I discovered that in the Greek it means selected by popular approval.

The Council (convention today) at Jerusalem was assembled to determine whether the church was bound to the past and whether God had said all that he was ever going to say; or whether it also belonged to the present and the future would be free. These decisions were decisions of members of local congregations and representatives. Certain individuals had great influence but the people had to be persuaded of their validity. The liberal, the conservative, the middle of the roader, in most cases, abided by the decision.

It is amazing how many who protest against a Pope who in a sense believes he is the church act as if they were the church. They refuse to permit causes or other matters to come before committees, boards, and congregations.

We ought to work through committees from the start, not only to save our skins and because it is democratic, but because it is the people who make up the body of Christ, the church.

In our program planning meetings, local, state, or national, we need representatives present who are selected by the church. The inference here is that the agency is not the church even though it may be doing the work of the church.

An Amos would have a difficult time getting into some

of our planning meetings because we would not choose a person who would upset things. But if the church chose him then we would have to reckon with him. God sometimes chooses to work with an Amos and we had better make it possible for us to hear such a person speak. For God gives knowledge and wisdom to others than the professional (I use this word in its finest sense) religious worker. Every Christian should be put to work and we have to find the way for him to go to work.

Yes, we are to ask what it is that God wants us to do and then do it regardless of the consequenses. We can get so tied to a system, a pattern, and an organization, that it is difficult for the creative to enter the picture. It is more apt to get into our plans and execution if we make it possible for the church to be represented by its own choosing. This would do away with the appointment of committees of just one sociological and theological thought pattern.

We have often acted as if we had no power but our own. But the early church believed that God was in the church until in the first generation they were accused of "turning the world upside down." They risked their lives to witness to the Gospel because they believed that God was working through them in the church. Talk about risks, they formed cells in the emperor's palace among the members of Caesar's household.

This is a plea that we make room for the conservative as well as for the liberal (I want it understood that I classify myself as a liberal) for the conservative also belongs to the church. Perhaps the Lord is saying to every one of us "You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you."

"Our Agreements"

W. F. Lown

In every area of disagreement among us there is some agreement; i.e., there are some people at every acclesiastical camp who would be found in agreement, and while disagreeing on some phases of an issue, we may all agree on other aspects. We may disagree as to whether Jesus was diety--uniquely the Son of God - but all will agree that He lived, and most will own Him as Lord of their lives.

It is therefore delicate journeying to speak for two million people and say, "On this we agree."

But we MUST search for those elusive tenents upon which all agree, and those basic precepts on which most agree; gather them together into as imposing a heap as they will make, and begin there to undo our wrongs and to try again to "press on" as did our fathers to the worthy objective of a solid phlanax against the Devil and all His devisive subterfuge. By this method we can use to search for unity by light, rather than sweating for it in the heat generated by our dissentions.

I propose to use Paul's plea to the Ephesians to classify the areas in which we are to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (1)

I

"There is one body...", said Paul.

Surely we have essentially agreed with Collossians 1:24 that the body should be called "the church." All are delighted to wear the name "Christian" as the disciples were first designated at Antioch. (Acts 11:26) Few would wear the name exclusively, but most would delight to have all Christen do m adopt it to the exclusion of all other names. Dr. William Robinson (2) speaking of the Restoration fathers, says:".. they took practical steps to repudiate for their own congregations all names but that of Christ, but this they did in no exclusive spirit." I believe this spirit essentially prevails to our day.

There is some agreement in the matter of congregational responsibility. A few are fighting to abolish the idea of local church autonomy, or the responsibility of self-management. Yet the Report of the Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ, to the International Convention at Colum-

bus, Ohio, in 1946 stated: (3) "We are agreed that from the beginning we have emphasized the autonomy of the local church."

Milligan, in his "Scheme of Redemption," (4) says that the Acts and the Epistles gi e the right of independence to local congregations to manage their own affairs.

Robinson (5) likes the term "Congregationalism": "it witnesses to the spiritual competence of the 'gathered community' to manage its own affairs."

The local congregation and the individual Christian are both responsible units in the matter of stewardship, both in the matter of receipts and disbursements. We are responsible to preach the gospel (Romans 12;4-8; I Cor. 12:4-27; and Acts 11;22). We are responsible for confronting the lost soul with Jesus Christ, his Saviour.

In the matter of worship, we are agreed upon the essentiality of corporate worship, as taught in Hebrews 10-25, and as observed all through the New Testament scriptures. We are agreed upon the day of corporate worship (Acts 20-7; I Cor. 16:2) We are of one heart in the matter of the Lord's Supper. We agree upon its centrality, its frequency, its symbolism, its use in the renewal of our covenant relation - ship with our Lord, and even upon the matter of open communion. We believe together in the importance of preaching. We all believe, though none practice too well, in the importance of private, personal worship, with its emphasis upon introspection, confession, and committment. We believe that the individual must personally pray even when participating in public worship. We even agree upon using an instrument of music in worship!

In the matter of the MISSION of the church, our gravest problems have to do with defining the church's mission. WE agree that it is redemptive, but we are not as one on that from which man is to be redeemed. Strangely enough, all our years of conversation notwithstanding, there is perhaps more agreement in METHOD than in the NATURE of the church's mission!

For example, we all employ evangelistic methods much the same - mass, personal and fireside. We all practice organization to some degree; we simply disagree on terms, and institutions. We agree on foreign and home missions-- and use many of the same tactics in carrying out the work. We agree on our need for Christian education at all levels. We even agree that our college professors are underpaid.

If we could resolve our problems of MISSION, we would find our problems of missions trivial.

Now to the matter of the ministry. We agree upon the need for a ministry and lament the scarcity of those devoting all their labors to it. We agree upon a paid ministry... "Necessity is laid upon me." Most of us agree on the matter of the ordination of the ministry, even with Robinson (6) when he says, "... the power to ordain, to convey Christ's commission to the ministry, rests with the church and not with the hierarchy." A few deny this in their emphasis.

We agree on what constitutes a "call" to the ministry We agree that every Christian has the right and duty to min - ister in any manner in which the church may call upon him ..provided he can qualify for the task. (Campbell bears this out in the 25th chapter of "The Christian System." (7) We agree with the commission on Restudy (8) when it says "...the unfinished business before the church (is) in the per- sons of those who have not heard or have not heeded the gos - pel of Christ;''

The UNITY of the body. We agree with the "Declaration and Address" in which Thomas Campbell's first proposition states (9), "...the Church of Christ upon earth is essential- ly, intentionally, and constitutionally one .'' We are concerned with Christian unity as evidenced by our presence here, and as stated by the Commission on Restudy (10) ".... The absolute necessity of Unity among Christians (is) a con- dition to the answer of Christ's prayer that the world may believe." (1948) report.

We agree with Dean England when in his concise little book, "We Disciples'', (11) he cites some requirements for unity, and lists: Basic faith and loyalty; liberty of opinion and practice within limits of that basic faith; ass- ociation with groups, for leavening purposes, with whom we cannot unite; testify against the sin of division (he con- demns the inarticulate middle group which he estimates at 90%); and hold aloft the goal of unity, John 17.

We agree that division is sin as pointed out inFirst Corinthians three and many other Biblical references. Kersch- ner.(12) says it is not only sin, it is embarrassing! The Commission on Restudy in its 1948 report said (13), "We can- not think of our brotherhood as a sect, but think of it rather as a demonstration of the unity to which Christ has called His whole church."

Though some seek to discount it, our people believe that the way to unity is the way of restoration. The Commis- sion on Restudy (14) (1946) said, "O u r commission agrees,

that the two concepts of unity and restoration have been, from the beginning, held together in a parity of mutual dependence." Robinson (15) says, "... we have insisted that the unity of the church will come by restoring the pattern of the church in belief, life and worship as given in the New Testament. This, too, is something which more and more is coming to dominate the Ecumenical movement." What a tragedy if we, the brotherhood which espoused the idea in this millenium, abandon the leadership of this appeal!

We all crave brotherhood. It is just that we all have trouble letting God be Chairman of the Membership Committee!

II

Said Paul, there is "....one hope of your calling." We heartily agree on the essentiality of the holy life, upon the basic requirement of Christian love, intelligent goodwill toward God and man; and with the Divine insistence upon the stewardship of things of life.

III

There is "...one Lord.' Some doubt His diety and spread their sinister poison. God be praised, this is by no means universal. The aforementioned Commission states, (16) "The Person of Jesus Christ, confession of whom as Son of God, Lord and Saviour, is the sole affirmation of faith necessary to the fellowship of Christians..." If anyone rejects Jesus' lordship, let him drop all pretense at being His servant!

IV

"...one faith." The family is sadly rent over its most precious tangible passession - The Bible. At least upon this do we agree....The Bible is at the heart and center of our movement. In 1948 the "Commission" spoke of "....the definite place which the New Testament holds in our personal religious life and in the work of the church." We agree in the rejection of human creeds as being essential to Christian faith. We are not, as the Unitarians, Indifferent to doctrine, but we desire as Robinson says (18) "personal allegiance, not intellectual subscription."

V

"...one baptism," On this we have been rent asunder since Memphis (1926), but let us salvage all we can that is held in common. Where baptism is practiced there is almost universal adherence to immersion; I have personally known of only one of our ministers to practice sprinkling. There is concerted rejection of infant baptism in favor of Biblical

believer's baptism.

VI

"...one God and Father of us all." Surely every one of us believes that there is one God, and that He is personal; He is Our Father, and He is concerned with our redemption.

VII

"...one Spirit." I have purposely reserved this from its proper order until this juncture. In regard to our attitude toward, and interest in, the Holy Spirit of God as manifested by our conversation and our concern that He dwells in us, there is apparent abuse and neglect. This is reflected in our own spirits. There is little to commend us in our sin of omission. Can this be why such a meeting as this is needed?

Conclusion

If we claim that our differences are in matters of method, we stand condemned for not relegating them to the area of expediency, and forthwith embracing each other.

If we conclude that our differences are in message let us pentiently beg Divine guidance, and devote ourselves to feverish research and soul-searching meditation until we have come, united, to the feet of Jesus, who espouses ..yea, pleads for unity and cannot abide confusion.

Just as in another Civil War, of which we know much and to our sorrow, political lines have been drawn which divide brethren espoused to the same convictions. These are false lines of demarkation doggedly insisted upon by the less thoughtful, who cannot trust themselves to inde - pendent thought and personal conviction, but who must have a crystallized, encapsulated, instutionalized frame of reference out of which to operate. While decrying sectarian ism, they insist upon a clear-cut, well defined sect into which they may retreat, out of the protective depths of which to hurl their epithets and anathemas. While espousing free-thinking, and "the broader view", and general ecumenism, they feel some desperate need for a tidy denomination which will coddle them, speak for them, lobby for them, and provide for their needs. While wailing for unity, (too often on any basis) we are coldest to and most rejecting of the saints in our own household. This makes it necessary for us to defend ourselves in our chosen entrenchments. We have permitted the father of lies, the Devil, to erect a great political divide, at a point where, in very fact, we are not actually divided.

I plead that we solicit the aid of our all-powerful Saviour, who, by His death once broke down anothermiddle wall of partition, and in whom alone all ecclesiastical and theological partitions, may be disentegrated, that by His grace and in His love we may forcibly and with dispatch dash down this dividing wall - this supposed division - and thus being able to see each other better, percieve the true issues which unite us in Christ; then let us mark the issues and the people who introduce the truly devisive innovations, and march on, in, and with the Lord, to the conquest of the whole world!

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"Our Agreements"

Tom O. Parish, D. D.

In 1809 we were agreed! From the maze and bewilderment of religious controversy, "Tired and sick of bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we desire to be at rest. We would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout the churches:- As would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole church of God" said Thomas Campbell in his declaration and address-

At a meeting held in Buffalo, August 17,1809, consisting of different religious persuasions; it was unanimously agreed to form themselves into a religious association. 21 of the number were appointed to meet and confer together and with the assistance of Mr. Thomas Campbell to determine upon the proper means to carry into effect the important ends of their association. The result of the conference was the "Declaration and address" printed on September 7, 1809.

This document enunciated the principles upon which the brethren were agreed, and these principles because the motivation for the movement to restore M. T. christianity in it's "Doctrines, ordinances, and fruits."

In 1809 we were agreed that God has revealed himself in both the"sacred scriptures (revelation) and in the universal intelligence or common sense which is a part of every human being's normal endowment. The consensus, therefore, of intelligent and consecrated Christian minds, rather than the dictates of one individual, like the Pope or of small cliques, like those who wrote the creeds, must be the final standard of Biblical interpretation."

In 1809 we were agreed upon such statements and mottos as:-

> "The church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."
>
> "Where the scriptures speak, we speak and where the scriptures are silent we are silent."
>
> "We have no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no aim but to serve."
>
> "We are not the only Christians, but we would be Christians only-"

In these and countless other enunciations we were agreed in 1809 as to the principle and procedures of the church in

policy and doctrine according to N.T. precedent.

In spite of our noble aspirations of becoming a guiding light for the whole Body of Christ as a restoration movement trending back to N.T. Christianity, it is now most evident both to ourselves and to Christendom that we have not been able to practice what we preach and that in at least one instance within the last 60 years we have found our own house divided against itself. This was the schism, based upon man's opinion, rather than the Word of God, which has now evolved into the robust and extremely authoritarian "Church of Christ".

Our Brotherhood has been threatened now by a second breach, based in the beginning, I believe, also upon mere man's opinions, as to the relative merits of organized missionary societies. This original dissention has now become somewhat obscured by other and for graver differences. In the minds of some, (shared by both sides), this breach has been so completely consumated that our Brotherhood has now suffered it's second schism and the Restoration movement now has two off-shoots; the Church of Christ, and the Independent, or "Church of Christ Number Two," to use title of Dr. A.T. De Grout.

It is in our fervent hope that the above is not true. There are devoted Christians on both sides of the question who hope there is yet a possibility of healing the breach. For this reason we have come together today.

It is good that we have come together. Too long there has been a growing estrangement among us, characterized in some instances by the silent treatment and aloofness, or in contrast, by too much glibbners and unstudied, unchristian vocalizing.

We have been like the boy who swallowed the birds egg, afraid to move lest it break and afraid to keep still lest it hatch.

Cato once said:-

> "It is remarkable that men, when they differ in what they think considerable, are apt to differ in almost everything else. This difference begets contradiction; contradiction begets heat; heat rises into resentment, rage and ill-will. Thus they differ in affection, as they differ in judgment, and the contention which began in pride ends in anger."

If we were once agreed in consecration to the commands of Christ, is it not possible for us to agree again under the same framework and impetus? I believe our agreements today

are far more numerous than the things which divide us.

Disregarding the extremists at either end, it can be accurately stated that we are still agreed upon most of the principles of the restoration as set forth by Thomas Campbell in his Declaration and Address-

In the risk of triteness may I say that we agree, in the mainstream of Brotherhood thought, on cardinal theological points such as the Fatherhood of God, the sonship and saviorhood of Christ, the authority of the scriptures and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In the mainstream, we are trinitarians

We are agreed upon God's redemptive plan:- That God was in the world reconciling the world unto himself through Jesus Christ." That "God so loved the world that He gave.. .....

I believe we are agreed that man's redemption is a mutual matter, or what Bruner called a "Divine-Human Encounter " -That God knocks at the door but that man must open the door.

We are surely agreed that our depraved world Needs the redemption of Christ and we are surely agreed that our personal and organizational differences impede rather than expedite our redemptive witness.

May I further state that the prime reason for our early dissention now seems to have been dissolved. Can it not be accurately said that both the Cooperatives and the Independents now agree on the value of

1. An annual assembly-
2. An organized missionary society or fellowship
3. An annual year book publishing names of Churches and ministers and reporting progress of the churches-
4. Bible colleges and schools for the training of ministers and full-time Christian servants.

It is increasingly apparent among us that our differences are not so much functional or organizational as they are theological. I leave the differences to my colleagues in the fervent prayer of John G. Whittier.

"All hearts confess the saints elect
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
And melt not in acid sect
The Christian pearl of Charity."

It is our earnest hope that out of our consultation will come no finalized futility such as that voiced by Will Carlton.

Will Carlton-

I have talked with Betsy
And Betsy has talked with me
And so we've agreed together
That we never can agree

But rather that the challenging words of Beecher may resound in our hearts:-

H.W. Beecher-

"Go on your knees before God
Bring all your idols; bring self-will,
Pride, and every evil lust before Him,
and give them up.
Devote yourself, heart and soul, to His will;
and see if you do not "know the doctrine."-

Tom O. Parish, D.D.

OUR DISAGREEMENTS

Leslie L. Kingsbury

This paper is the result of an honest searching for a presentation of the thinking of those who represent the co-operative work of our Brotherhood. I am indebted to many who have written in this area.

I am sure that it is a matter of concern to us all that in a Movement dedicated to Christian unity disagreements should have arisen as to the way in which we should witness for Christ. This has greatly weakened the effectiveness of our work and has confused many people, both those in our churches and the religious world on the outside.

I speak as a cooperative, and as one who has lived in a background of cooperation on three continents. My great grandparents and grandparents on both sides were among the early pioneers of our Movement in Australia and active in the organizational life of the Brotherhood and in World Outreach. I grew up within the framework of cooperation in Kentucky, where most of my father's ministry was. From my early childhood as Brotherhood leaders have visited in the home of my grandparents and parents, I have come to love and trust our Brotherhood Leaders of the older generation and our contemporaries of today. In my college and seminary days spent in Brotherhood related institutions I have had the opportunity to deepen my understanding of our Movement and have been in a class room relationship with many who are now in positions of leadership in our Brotherhood life. However, it was not until I was in Edinburgh, Scotland working on a doctoral dissertation on "The Philosophical Influences Bearing on Alexander Campbell and the Beginnings of the Disciples of Christ Movement" that I gave any serious and exhaustive study to extensive writings of our founding fathers. I expect we can find many of the roots of our difficulties today as well as many of our strengths in these early writings.

I. THE VIEWS OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

Alexander Campbell's conception of the relation of the local congregation to the universal church underwent consid--erable change during the course of his lifetime. Most of the factions which have developed in the Movement of which Campbell was the leading spirit have arisen from conflicting views regarding his conception of the relationships beyond the local church. What I reflect are the mature views which he reached as he came to grips with the rapid growth of the

Movement and as the need of organization became more imperative.

The first proposition in Thomas Campbell's "Declaration and Address" was something with which Alexander Campbell wholeheartedly agreed. The proposition reads: "The Church of Christ is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one." Each of these words is important in understanding how Campbell felt about the church. It is "constitutionally one." In other words, the church is not simply a group of people who decide to come together to worship in a particular way; it is a body with a constitution, not depending upon the particular whims and fancies of the members of the group. The church is "intentionally one." It was the full intention of Jesus Christ that his followers be united. There is no justification for men dividing themselves over their own opinions about the gospel. And the church is "essentially one." This is a kind of philosophical word, and it means basically, fundamentally, by nature, the church is a unity. By definitions it cannot be otherwise. When we speak of the various churches, we are simply admitting our own shortcomings and weaknesses in not being able to stay together. For, it is not really proper to speak of "churches" except in the sense of individual portions of the church, worshiping in seperate places. On the other hand, the word "churches" is the only word we can use to describe the present condition of things for we certainly do have the church divided. The Campbell's had hoped for a reunion of these divisions, or rather the disappearance of them, altogether.

I think it is important in this discussion to realize the teaching of Campbell in the relationship between the Word of God and the Church. He saw that the whole trouble on the question of authority has come through setting the New Testament over against the Church, or the Church over against the New Testament. He claimed that the New Testament contained a record of the creative experience of the Church and so it provided the norm of the essential genius of Christianity. Everything in the developing life of the Church down through the ages must be tested by this. He set the Church and the New Testament together. Behind both was the Gospel. Because the Gospel was prior to both and above both, the Church in every age and every interpretation of Scripture must be brought under the judgment of the Gospel. The New Testament was therefore all important as a standard of authority for the Church.

When it came to the question of interpretation, he knew the difficulties caused by private interpretation working alone. He claimed therefore that in all matters which had to do with the division between Churches an appeal must be made to the competent, qualified, spiritual scholarship of the Church in all ages and in all its scattered communions.

Such was his faith in universal reason. Thus for him the New Testament was always the authority, but it was an authority set within a living institution which had the responsibility of interpretation. He was not afraid to submit any matter of controversy to the judgment of the sanctified scholarship of the Church universal.

Alexander Campbell could say, "It is not the will of Jesus Christ, because it is not adapted to human nature, nor to the present stste of His Kingdom as administered in his absence, that the church should be governed by a Written document alone." (Christian System, p. 173) He was anxious to avoid private interpretations of a literalistic and legalistic kind. He drew a line between what it "revealed" and what is expedient. The Bible is the final authority for all that is revealed, but in questions of expediency the Church is the authority.

Perhaps one of the basic differences between cooperatives and independents lies here in the nature of Biblical revelation. The cooperatives see the New Testament as a record of the faith of the early Church as it responded to God's salvation through Jesus Christ. The independents tend to see the New Testament as a literal, legal constitution from which the exact policy for the Church may be deduced. The cooperatives believe that the historical study of the Bible has greatly enriched our understanding of it and has resulted in bringing the various Church bodies much closer together in their thinking. The independents in many instances have feared this scholarly study of the Bible. The cooperatives place primary emphasis on restoring the "spirit" of New Testament Christianity rather than restoring an exact pattern.

One fallacy in Campbell's view was his failure to see the principle of development in the New Testament church organization. It is true that he had some recognition of this in his drawing the distinction in matters of church order and discipline between the realms of order and expediency. But he failed to realize, what later studies have fully explored concerning the varieties of New Testament religion. These facts are fully documented in such books as E. F. Scott's The Varieties of New Testament Religion and John Knox's The Early Church and the Coming Great Church and in an article on "Church Organization in the New Testament and Among the Disciples of Christ" by Dwight Stevenson-April, 1959 issue of the College of The Bible Quarterly, Suffice to say here, the Church was first a fellowship and a Movement. These are growing affairs. The Church began almost without any machinery and gradually evolved a structure of offices

as it needed them, suiting the structure to the individual situation. The fundamental principle of Church organization, even in the New Testament, is expediency. In the New Testament Church organization is not everywhere the same and in the same pattern.

Campbell really arrived at his final positions on church organization by reacting to the practical difficulties which emerged in the growing Movement he headed. It was not until the Mahoning Baptist Association, having been captured for the Reformers by Walter Scott, voted itself out of existence in the Summer of 1830, that the need was paramount From this time forward he begin to argue for some plan which would save the Movement from rank congregational anarchy. It was his firm belief that the plan for this organization could be found in The New Testament. "If Christ has established a church, that it has some organization becomes evident. The germs alone of this organization are discernable in the New Testament." (M. H. 1842, p. 508) Practical needs and problems were the basis of this search. (1) Evangelists had to be sent out and supported; this was beyond the province of the local church. (2) The training of the ministry could not be done by one church. (3) Some order was needed to protect the separate congregations from roving imposters and charlatans who ordained themselves to the ministry and used the gift of gab to exploit the people. (4) The growth and size of the successful Movement made state and National assemblies desirable and practically forced some kind of decision about organization. (5) And there were disputes and difficulties calling for some machinery of church discipline.

Campbell discovered that the New Testament taught by precept and example the "necessity of united and concentrated action in the advancement of the kingdom. It lays down some great principles and applies them to the emergencies that arise." (M. H., 1842, p. 62) Among these are the necessity of cooperation, of two distinct classes of officers in every community (Elders and Deacons), of a third class of public functionaries with different ministries (Evangelists), the necessity of choice, selection and ordination to office; a general superintendency of districts and cities by those who preside over churches in those districts.

His realization of the need for some order and procedure for the rapidly growing Movement of which he was the foremost leader is indicated in these words, as he began a series of articles on church organizations:

> As we proceed through the sacred history of the New Testament .we shall have more reason to urge the adoption of such measures as will prevent the injuries now being inflicted by some novices, and call forth and sustain emergencies more in keeping with the high character of Christ's

church, and more promotive of her prosperity than the present haphazard system of operations which accident and not choice has inflicted on us. (M. H.,,1842, p. 137)

His dilemma was that he saw too much independence and democracy in one scheme and too much monarchy and despotism in another scheme of ecclesiastical organization.

In addition to the Congregational element found in the constitution and details of the Christian Church "there is also a Presbyterian element and also an Episcopalian element" (B.M.H., 1853, pp. 279,389) It is clear that Campbell would have preferred a form which had a combination of congregational and presbyterian features, but the movement spread so rapidly, it eventually took a congregational form.

When writing about church order he indicated that persons qualified should be selected and appointed by the "common consent of the whole community." "The voice of the whole people is the voice of God because it is the voice of reason and truth." (M.H., 1846, p. 435) An interesting thing about this view Campbell expressed is that he not only affirmed the "right" of the "common mind" to be expressed, both in the affairs of the local church and in supra-local affairs, but he affirmed the "rightness" of the decisions that the common mind would make. (M.H., 1843, pp. 133 -137) Here is the ultimate of faith in the democratic process.

He regarded a single congregation of Christians as "the highest court of Christ on earth, in all cases of its own jurisdiction." In all that concerns the spread of Christianity, in the same manner as did the primitive church, he believed in a cooperation of churches "in any form of conventional or associational agreement, periodical or contingent as circumstances or emergencies require, or the general conversion and salvation of the world may demand at our hands." (M.H., 1850, p.230) In what concerns every private community, each local congregation is independent of and irresponsible to another, but in all that pertains to "the interests, honor, and prosperity of all" it is "both dependent and responsible to every community." (Ibid, p. 286)

A missionary society, according to Campbell, was the church of any given area, assembled to discover ways and means for accomplishing the spread of the gospel with more concentrated power and efficiency. (M.H., 1830, p. 208) Cooperation among Christian Churches in the affairs of common salvation is "not only inscribed on every page of apostolic history, but is itself of the very essence of the Christian institution." (M.H., 1835, p. 120)

Campbell's wishes for a delegate convention were wholly unrealized during his lifetime. By 1869 at Louisville, Kentucky an effort was made in this direction that failed, and again in 1913, largely because in addition to the delegates there were far more visitors.

II. THE CHURCH TODAY

Having taken a look at our origins, let us look next at the nature of the church as we view it in contemporary terms. The basic term by which the church may be defined is that of fellowship. When the church began this was an unstructured fellowship. If we cast aside all the accumulations of the centuries, we still have the fellowship of followers who believe in Jesus Christ. The church is a voluntary fellowship involving responsibilities on its members. Though it is congregational it is also universal.. The church cannot find its true nature in the concept of local autonomy alone any more than the branches can live apart from the vine. When we use the term, "the body of Christ," we imply a oneness that transcends the diversity and even the divisions found in the Church. Paul gives expression to this when he says, "For as in one body we have many members and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another." Whatever strengthens the essential oneness of the church strengthens the nature of the church, and whatever weakens this oneness weakens the real nature of the church.

The church is interdependent in many of its relationships. Unified Promotion in our own Brotherhood is an example of the way in which this interdependence has been recognized and practiced. It has often been called the "Community Chest" of the fifty-seven Brotherhood Agencies which use its service. It is the family budget of these Agencies. The State Society is dependent on the Seminary for furnishing the Church with its leadership, and the Seminary on the Colleges and local Churches for furnishing it the candidates for the Ministry. The dependence of the local Church upon the various Agencies and dependence of the Agencies upon one another all emphasize the interdependent nature of the Church as a fellowship, its oneness and its universality. We belong together. We need each other. Independent missions rest on a false premise, because it violates the interdependent nature of the Church.

The Church is mission. The Church exists because it has a mission. Its mandate is to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. If the Church is not missionary in its program and practice, it is not true to its essential nature.

Freedom and autonomy must be rightly understood if they are to be exercised in a Christian way. The local Church, for example, is free and autonomous by New Testament precedent. But it must use this freedom to do what it OUGHT to do; not to follow each whim and fancy of the moment, apart from the Church as a whole. Unfortunately, a great number of congregations have dissipated much of their strength by failing to see that not only are fellowship of both mind and spirit possible without falling prey to some overhead authority but such cooperation is absolutely essential for all who wish to be New Testament Christians.

I think it should be said here that there is no thought in our cooperative churches of freezing the "status quo." This is true both in our state and national work. I happen to be chairman of a committee on Restudy of Existing State organization appointed by the State Convention looking toward Unification at the State level. This same restudy is going on now at the National level through action of our International Convention. As a Brotherhood with a sense of Christian responsibility we are seeking new levels of fellowship and understanding. We are living in a society which is dynamic and revolutionary and the Church has the obligation to minister in Christ's name as the needs arise. Old structures must yield to reconstruction as new needs and objectives emerge.

III. POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT

Having stated some of the underlying principles for the cooperative churches of our Movement developing such structures as they have, I need now to indicate at what point these appear to be in disagreement with our independent brethren.

We believe that missionary work should be done on a cooperative basis since cooperation was the practice of the New Testament Church. Paul warned against division. "Is Christ divided?" he asked, The 12th chapter of I Corinthians states well the necessity for interdependence and cooperation in the body of Christ. Jesus' great prayer was that "they all may be one..so that the world may believe." (John 17:21) Cooperation is needed if a worldwide Christian community is to be achieved.

A real weakness in "direct support" missionary work is the assumption of rights and responsibility by an individual or some self-chosen group. This often leads to dictatorial practices. The right to select missionaries and administer missionary work actually belongs to all the Churches through the avenues of democracy. "Independents" by the very nature of the way they operate tend to avoid the corrective process

that comes from review and revision of their work and the guidance of seasoned oversight. The fruits of independency are all too often divisiveness with the consequent denial of Brotherhood.

No Church can be completely independent, for it is linked to sister Churches which help to create and sustain it. Only in limited local matters is a Church independent, or only as the vine breaks away from the branches, And a vine broken from branches withers and dies. The New Testament Church was a unity of love and interdependent fellowship.

No missionary can be completely independent. The independent missionary frequently uses cooperative schools, hospitals, language schools, bookstores and cooperatively translated Sunday School materials. Independents face the dilemma of either producing their own materials which are inadequate and expensive or using materials prepared by cooperative groups. As a result of seeing better church school literature produced economically by the thinking and pooled funds of cooperative groups, a number of independent missions have become more cooperative in this phase of the missionary enterprise. In a sense this is a parasitical relationship. A parasite is "an organism living in, on, or with another organism at whose expense it is maintained.

So often independent missionaries go to new fields without adequate preparation and orientations, and sometimes even without medical examination. It is important that those who represent us have adequate preparation for meeting many of the complex problems which they still face. Missionaries of the United Society have the benefit of this preparation before they go to the field.

Some countries react against missionary work because of the questionable practices of some members of independent groups. This makes it difficult to have good relations with the governments and sometimes makes it impossible for Christian work to be continued. Where no screening is done before approving missionary candidates and where there is no audit of mission accounts, almost anyone who hears a "call" can try to do mission work. For some members of independent groups the end justifies the means. It may mean splitting a church or stealing a church from another group.

The direct-support missionary must spend much of his time writing personal letters in order to keep money coming for the maintenance of his station and the support of himself and family. One missionary among this group claimed he depended on 250 American laymen for his support in addition to several churches, and with whom he corresponded while on the mission field. Another independent missionary confessed it took 40% of his time to keep up with the correspondence.

This is overhead. Independent missionaries have to come home more frequently to raise money for their cause. Often times churches which have promised financial support reduce or cancel their committments and make it necessary for the direct support missionary to contact additional churches ir order that sufficient money will be available to maintain the station and support him and his family.

There is another weakness in direct support missions. That is the mortality of stations closed after what seemed a noble beginning. What happens when a missionary in a one man station leaves on furlough? The work disintegrates, and if the missionary fails to return the entire area slips back into its original religious practices. Far more independent mission stations have been closed for various reasons than has been true of our cooperative enterprise.

What about title to Independent mission property? What happens to it if a station is closed? In some cases it is in the hands of an organization that holds title for the future good of mission work. But in many cases this is not true. Title is vested in the missionary personally. If for any reason the station is abandoned the property is sold and the proceeds used by the missionary for his own personal usage.

In evaluating the Direct Support Mission program one must not overlook the plight of stranded missionaries, which was especially serious during the depression of the '30's. When individual churches were unable to continue their missionary giving, men, women and children were left stranded in foreign countries without money and without help. Some were cared for by mission stations sponsored by the W.C.M.S where food, shelter and return transportation were provided for those abandoned by their supporting churches in America.

It is true, there are some good direct support missionaries and some have done good work. But it must still be stated that in large measure, independent missionary work lacks continuity, stability, security, and unity, such as would naturally be expected in the body of Christ.

We believe that we get more for our money through missionary work done through the United Christian Missionary Society. Every cent of every dollar a church sends to the U.C.M.S. is used in missionary work. This is because income from special gifts-memorials, wills, annuities, trust funds--income from the younger churches overseas and home missions more than pays for the cost of administration.

The cost of overhead even so, is very small, in the

United Society amounting to 12 or 13% of the total funds administered. There is no question but that in the long run the whole missionary dollar administered by trustees, experienced people, and well trained missionaries goes farther and does more than the so called "direct support" dollar. In any business a dollar entrusted with an organization responsible to its constituency, is more secure and does more than one invested with an individual. In missionary work, a dollar audited and reported on to a Board of Trustees, is more productive than one given to a person who is responsible only to a local Church or Churches.

The support of the United Christian Missionary Society which is in the noble succession of the first organized Christian Missionary Society of the Brotherhood that began in 1849 is one of the marks of a cooperative Church for this is the responsible instrument of the Christian Churches approved by the International Convention. It was conceived after careful study and planning. It is a proved instrument. The churches chose it as a way of work and the Churches continue to support it. The work continues to move forward. The program of world mission of the United Christian Missionary Society has never been more dynamic or extensive than it is today. To be sure, it does not measure up to all that we would like to have it be. The needs on the fields where our missionaries labor are far greater than any which have been met, but any fair study of the history of the world mission sustains the conclusion that it is a growing, expanding and fruitful enterprise. Approximately 4500 congregations support this work representing three-fourths of the resident membership of Christian Churches.

The United Society has been so often accused by the independents of advocating open membership, that I think this clear statement from the President of the Society, Dr. A. Dale Fiers, which appeared in the April, 1955 issue of Leaven, needs to be made:

> The attitude toward open membership on the foreign field is exactly the same as the attitude of the Society toward open membership at home, namely, that the right of decision in the matter of determining policies on receiving members is the right of the local congregation. The United Society does not presume to be an ecclesiastical authority which makes decisions for the local church at home Neither does it make decisions for nature and self directing churches on the mission fields. The United Society is concerned about the doctrines and faith and practices of local churches at home and abroad.

As an agency of the churches, the United Society does not advocate open membership. It is likewise true that the United Society does not break fellowship with those churches either in the homeland or abroad, which by their own decision receive the unimmersed into their fellowship.

A very careful procedure for working out the relationships involved in organic unions of Christian movements, such as the United Church of Christ in Japan and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, has been written out in the United Society's Strategy of World Missions. These procedures are designed to preserve within our churches the great heritage and witness which we have as Disciples of Christ. In both the Philippines and Japan these mergers have been effected in such a way as to preserve for historically related churches of the Disciples of Christ the right of full congregational authority and autonomy in determining their practices of receiving members and calling ministers. Some of these churches may decide to practice inclusive membership. The question then follows, what will the United Society do if some of these churches on their own initiative adopt such a practice? Once again the answer is, the attitude of the Society will be exactly the same as it is here in the United States of America. We will not break fellowship with these churches on the basis of that one decision.

The question has also been asked, Does this mean that the missionaries have a right to preach anything they desire, even if in so doing they depart from the position of the Restoration Movement?

Missionaries of the United Society are responsible representatives of the Brotherhood and the Society. They are selected because of their Christian conviction and commitment and sent out to the foreign fields because they have a contribution to make.

The United Society does not regiment and require missionaries to sign a creed or statement of their faith. However, they are not free to preach whatever they desire, whether or not it is in keeping with the historical principles of the Disciples of Christ. As a matter of actual

fact, the missionaries are rarely pastors of churches and therefore, are not the ones who receive into membership those who make the confession of their faith.

It is entirely possible that a missionary in Japan may be working with a church that practices inclusive, or even with a church that has its historic roots in another communion. This does not mean that he is responsible for all the practice of that particular congregation.

It is important for us to face the fact that when the churches of any given area or country organically merge into a united Church of Christ they become a part of a larger fellowship. Within that fellowship they must assume responsibility for contributing their own distinctive witness to the Christian faith and to the preservation of those practices which they feel are in keeping with the New Testament church. In this sense our churches cease to become separated and are truly a movement within the United Church. Far from abandoning our precious ideals, it is the concern of the United Society to see that in such unions the witness of the Disciples of Christ is maintained. In this way our witness may enrich the other churches who are a part of that fellowship.

It is possible that in a situation where organic union of churches is affected the developments may be such that it would be unwise, if not impossible for the United Society to be actively identified. For example, a United church might accept a creed. The strategy statement makes careful provision for such situations. In those cases the United Society would have to withdraw its missionaries and its resources and either abandon its field, or make its separate witness outside of the United Church. We must not prejudge such situations, but if they arise, the determining point will be whether or not we can participate and make our witness effectively.

Christian unity is on the march around the world. Disciples of Christ must rise to the challenge and play their full part in the coming together of the church. This does not mean that we have to approve the practice of open membership. It means that we identify ourselves with worthy cooperative movements toward unity in which we can honestly maintain our witness as the Disciples of

Christ. Any who reject such cooperation must follow the logic of their decisions to the point where they give a separate witness outside of all cooperative channels of fellowship with other religious bodies. The United Society is not prepared to take this isolated approach in a time that demands the unity of the church.

Other marks of a cooperative Church are participation in and support of District and State Conventions of the Christian Church and International Convention; the giving of the major portion of missionary money through Unified Promotion, the National Benevolent Association, and the other member agencies of the International Convention; the moral and financial support and the recruitment of students for the Colleges and Seminaries in the area where the Church is located; attendance of children, young people and adults at Camps and Conferences jointly sponsored by the state and area missionary societies of the Christian Church, a Christian Women's Fellowship associated with the State and National Christian Women's Fellowship and a Christian Men's Fellowship with the same affiliation; a Church School using the materials planned by the Curriculum and Program Council of the Christian Church and published by the Christian Board of Publication; enrollment in the Pension Fund; cooperation in the interdenominational work of the community—membership in local and state Council of Churches and local Ministerial Associations; moral and financial support of the National and World Council of Churches.

Our cooperative Churches support our college and seminaries affiliated with the Board of Higher Education. Our colleges for the most part are accredited by their regional accrediting agencies and their credits can be transferred at face value to any other university or seminary in the land. These colleges are training ministers and Christian laymen and laywomen for the various professions and businesses prevalent today. These colleges and seminaries are a part of our brotherhood life and when there are drives such as the Crusade for Christian World and the Decade of Decision they are members of the team for they have a vital concern with the total mission of the Church. Students who attend these colleges and seminaries have a rich background of training so essential for the Christian laymen and ministers. For the ministry, the educational preparation recommended is that of seven years beyond high school graduation, culminating in a Bachelor of Divinity Degree from one of our five Seminaries, or from one of our interdenominational Seminaries. Our Seminaries are accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools.

Another important growth in our Brotherhood life in the last twenty-five years are the Disciple Foundations located usually in conjunction with a local Church at our State University and State College Centers. Since by far the majority of Christian Church students are attending State Schools, it is imperative they have the opportunity for training in religion and for vital Christian fellowship during their university days. Here is one of the important mission fields of America. While there is still too much dependence on the individual Church where the University is located to carry forward this endeavor, the state and national support which has been forthcoming has made it possible for a significant work to go on which is vital to local Churches as the youth graduate and assume positions of responsibility in the leadership of the local Church.

Independent Churches for the most part have their men trained at Bible Colleges which cannot meet the academic standards of Regional Accrediting Agencies or the American Association of Theological Schools pre-requisites for admission to Seminaries. A number of independent colleges have been affiliating with the National Accrediting Association of Bible Institues and Colleges. This association, at least in its beginning stages, required the signing of a written creed, on the part of all who were accredited. It is hard to believe that our independent Bible Colleges could sign this as it is in such violation of our Disciple tradition with regard to creeds. "No creed but Christ." The creed is as follows:

1. We believe that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authortative Word of God.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his miracles, in his vicarious death and atonement through his shed blood, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal and visible return in power and glory.

4. We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he was tempted by Satan and fell, and that, because of the exceeding sinfulness of human nature, regeneration

by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for salvation.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by Whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life, and by Whom the Church is empowered to carry out Christ's great commission.

6. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost; those who are saved unto the resurrection of life and those who are lost unto the resurrection of damnation. (The Scroll, p.155, 156)

Our independent colleges have felt no responsibility to our State Societies, our District and State Conventions and our International Convention, or to the United Christian Missionary Society, or to the Christian Board of Publication, our Brotherhood Publishing Agency. In fact they have seemed to foster independent preaching rallies, the work of the Standard Publishing Company, and Christian Service Camps and Conference in opposition of the program of our state and national work. Often times the students they have sent to cooperative Churches as Ministers have swung the Churches to independency.

Another area that has caused dissension amongst us is in the matter of Church Extension. Independent Churches often are developed in areas where a cooperative Church already exists or where other cooperative Churches are working on a project to establish a Church in a new area. They do this without consultation with the existing Churches or the state organization.

As we consider what are some of the causes that have brought about disunity in our Brotherhood certainly one has been the friction resulting from attacks on brotherhood cooperative work by the Christian standard. This has been well documented in Dr. Stephen J. Corey's "Fifty Years of Attack and Controversy." They charge that the Brotherhood was in the hands of modernists, and that the literature of the Christian Board of Publication was untrue to the Bible. For years almost every issue contained some criticism of individuals, churches, or agencies of the Brotherhood. Readers and listeners took sides. Hatred began; the spirit of hate increased through the years until it mastered the lives of many wonderful Christian men and women. An interesting sidelight is recorded by

Win R. Matsler with regard to Russell Errett, manager of the Christian Standard, and Archibald McLean, President of the Foreign Missionary Society. The two were students at Bethany College at the same time. Both were exceptional leaders in campus activities, and usually were on opposite sides on any issue before the student body or any activity or project sponsored by the college. And, to cap everything else, these two young men fell in love with the same lady. Mr. Errett married her and Mr. McLean died a bachelor. The college rivalries and courtship years were never forgotten and were at least a hidden reason for Mr. Errett's attacks on the Foreign Christian Missionary Society and its successors, the United Christian Missionary Society.

As I look back at the record it seems to me the human factor has had a great deal to do with our division. Personalities have aspired to certain positions in our colleges or missionary societies, and having failed to achieve these goals have set up something in opposition. In order to gain support they have waved a red flag, and bitterly opposed the work of cooperation. Strong personalities clashed, on the platform or in the pages of periodicals. Sometimes opponents rushed into print, expressing views which were not naturally considered, and whose publication may have stirred up more excitement than the issue warranted. Sometimes, no doubt, consistency itself dictated a course of action; after a prominent man has taken a stand, "face saving" prevented him from admitting a mistake, even though evidence subsequently unearthed clearly indicated his error.

It is my conviction that if there is disagreement about the policies of our cooperative work, there is the opportunity through democratic channels of doing something to correct what might be wrong. Unfortunately this has not happened in our brotherhood life and competing institutions and ways of doing things have arisen amongst us.

While any Minister amongst us would like to continue ties with cooperative and independent Ministers in the nature of the case this is difficult. The natural opportunities at District, State and National levels as we convene in such gatherings do not offer the opportunity of fellowship with those of differing view point as to cooperation and independency, and there is not time for the average Minister to fulfill its responsibilities to his local congregation and go to the Conventions of both groups.

We do not believe that a person or a Church can be neutral in regard to missionary work. Sometimes a Church Board asks a minister the question: "Do you believe in cooperative missionary work?" His answer may be: "I go whichever way the Church goes." thinking that this implies neutrality. Actually this shows opposition or indifference to Brotherhood cooperation. A Minister said he was neutral in regard to cooperative work. All the while he was eliminating the use of all literature connected with cooperative Brotherhood work. All young people were directed from Young People's Conferences to Christian Service Camps. Teachers who believed in cooperative missions were replaced. Finally when he could not swing the Church to independency, he split it, for no Church is neutral.

Each decision we make is for or against cooperation in some way or another. We cannot support two sides of a question. We may look at both sides of an issue. We may face any problem fairly, frankly, and honestly, but the moment we do we are no longer neutral. One may decide to support both sides or parties in an issue for some particular reason, but he is always inclined toward one or the other. Either a person believes in the principle of cooperation, or he does not. The idea that one can be neutral has confused the issue.

Independents have taken such a rigid position on numerous questions of method and doctrine as to lose completely any force as a movement for unity among Christians as a whole in the world. No outside observer hearing the message of the independents would guess these workers were a part of an historic program established to bring harmony and unity in Christendom. They have not emphasized the "common Christianity" which Protestants hold and which Campbell so sorcefully recognized. The independents themselves make no attempt to carry their message for unity, if any, into the many movements of study and action in behalf of Church unity which are so lively in the world today. Independent ministers usually avoid City Ministerial Associations, almost always oppose City And State Councils, and deplore the work of the World Council of Churches. Their program for unity, as with hundreds of other earnest groups, is "come and join us."

This attitude of the independents is contrary to the spirit and attitude of cooperative leaders. The trend of cooperation has been in pursuit of the unity of the Church, and therefore, cooperative men have associated themselves at every opportunity with interdenominational action and with the ecumenical movement. This association has made us appreciative of the history, the traditions, the doctrines and the organization of other communions, and has enables us to have

a better understanding of our own heritage as we have sought to interpret it to others. We have come to realize that it is only in fellowship with other denominations in worship, study and work that the essential unity of the Church can be experienced. The unity of the church is not something that men can create. It was given to us by the Lord.

Humility is a pre-requisite to a real venture in Christian unity. In an ecumenicl fellowship, such as the assemblies of the National and World Councils, humility often results from observation of the faith and character of Christians from many denominations. It is in this fellowship that the most creative work for the unity of the Church is going on.

There are some things that we have to say to our fellow Christians in the ecumenical movement. First of all, we must declare that Christian unity must be a primary concern, and not just a peripheral interest. Likewise, we hold that doctrinal conformity is not essential to Christian unity. The one bond which holds us together is loyalty to Jesus Christ, our personal devotion to Him. Our witness to the meaning of baptism by immersion is among the things that we can say to our fellow Christian in the ecumenical movement. But the form of baptism is not our only interest. We are concerned with the recovery of the significance of "believer"s baptism" The weekly observance of the Lord"s Supper gives a greater strength to faith and effort. Therefore, in all considerations of Christian unity we can bear testimony to the practice of observing this each Sunday. What lay leadership can contribute to the Worship Service at Communion is also something unique with us. These are only some of the things that we can carry with us. We can also realize that in this fellowship we can learn much from the other great communions of the Church.

All that I have been saying roots in a concern that Christ's Church be truly representative of Him in the world today. Christ calls us to unity in our own ranks and to do our part in seeking an organic unity of the Church. We must exhaust every democratic effort to live in mutual helpfulness before concluding that God simply cannot get along without making another fragment of the already shattered cross. Democracy has responsibilities. No system of church government is perfect when in human hands. Democratic methods are more true to the spirit of the New Testament than any other. We have the opportunity to show that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand.

"Our Disagreements"

Harry Poll

At the outset, let me say that I speak for myself only, though I believe my thinking will, in the main, coincide with that of the majority of those known as "independents." I assumed that we understand the groups we are speaking about, though we may not be able to define too closely the "organized" and the "independents." In both camps are the moderates and the extremists.

As I see it, the issue which divides us is not a matter of publishing houses. It is not a question of who shall supply our literature, rather it is a question of the literature itself. The issue is not one of religious journals. Whether one reads the Christian Evangelist-Front Rank, the Christian Standard, the Christian Century or whether he reads none at all is a matter of choice. The issue is not one of personalities, though, admittedly, Church History is built around persons. Our loyalty is to Christ rather than to human leaders. The issue is not one of Conventions. Whether one goes to the International, the North American, both, or neither is a matter of choice. Attendance at any similar gathering is purely optional. The issue is not one of missionary methods. There is something to be said for and against the methods employed by each group. Here again there must be freedom of choice; no method should be made a test of fellowship.

I believe the issue is in the realm of faith; i. e. that which we believe, preach, and practice --the DOCTRINE.

Time will not permit a review of the history of the Restoration movement, nor is it necessary since all are reasonably well-informed concerning it. When, how, and why we came into being; our position, our mission, and our progress are well known to all present. This movement was dynamic, growing, the fastest-growing religious group in the world. But something happened; our gains were somewhat dissipated; our movement soon failed to move. What was wrong? Our difficulties are deep-seated and long standing; their roots go deep.

In the very beginning our people recognized the need of training. As a result Bacon College was established at Georgetown, Kentucky in 1836. This institution ultimately became old Kentucky University, now Transylvania and the College of the Bible. In 1840, Alexander Campbell established Bethany College. Other institutions were established following these pioneer efforts. The purpose of these

schools was the establishing of a trained ministry, and from these schools came great preachers and teachers who gave strength and poise to our movement.

Then came the feeling that there ought to be a higher level of training -- graduate study. We did not have such schools so our preacher entered other institutions of learning -- Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Union Theological Seminary and Chicago University. Out of these schools much good has come but much which is not good as well. From these schools came radical Biblical criticism, which in some instances resulted in the complete emasculation of the Word and the complete destruction of The Book. Man questioned its authenticity and its divine authorship; they completely dissected and bisected the Bible, ultimately destroying it. As a consequence men rose above the "thus saith the Lord" and began to accept the wisdom of men as over against the wisdom of God. Therein rests some of our difficulty, for some of these people came into positions of responsibility and leadership among us. Not only having departed from the faith themselves they put into the thinking of others their own misgivings and their own lack of belief in the Word of God until The Book itself became of book of folklore and, to some, God was upon the same level as "santa Claus" or "Uncle Sam." The Son of God was truly a good man but not the Son of God in the sense that we had understood (and many still believe) Him to be -- the only begotten Son of God and, literally, God manifest in the flesh, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Now as a result of the substitution of human authority, for divine authority there came certain natural consequences. There are four points of issue among us thich I shall name. These are not exhaustive as time will not permit. These expressions of human wisdom found vocal expression in these four areas:

(1) Federation. Federation is a limited form of union in which each participant retains his own denominational connection while working with others in a joint effort. Thus, in a federated church two or more separately enrolled denominational groups worship at the same hour in the same place under the same leadership; and in federated missionary activities workers who remain under the direction of separate mission boards work together as they are able. In practice, the denomination represented by the largest forces frequently dominates and finally takes over the church or project (See Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations, pp. 90,91).

We have abhorred this type of appeasement or compromise for it involves giving-up and accepting both of which may not be acceptable as far as the Word of God is concerned. Under such an arrangement we lose our idenity, our message, our mission, and to all practical purposes aid and abet denominationalism. Indeed, we ourse'.. . beco an- other denomination.

(2) Denominationalism. There has been and still is, a steady drift to the status of a denomination. We have tried to avoid the stigma of it by employing such terms as "other communions", "other religious bodies", "our neigh-- bors", etc.. The fact remains that more and more many of the leaders of the Disciples have accepted, and appear to be happy in, the status of a denomination, with the result that through counting ourselves as equal or one of the existing denominations we lose our witness. We have no quarrel whatever in reaching out and fellowshipping with those who are not of like mind, providing we do not violate our own conscience nor in any sense retreat from the positions the Scriptures so clearly delineate. We are not a denomination. We refuse to be called one. If we are one, then the only kind and proper things for us to do would be to completely disappear and go back into the elements out of which we presumable came in the very beginning.

(3) Comity. Comity is the practice of allotting areas, or territories, on the foreign field, and in some instances here in the homeland, agreeing to remain in one area and stay out of others. This, again, is merely saying that the denominations are equal to us and their practices are as valid as what we do by Scriptural authority. This is an admission that the denominationalist have a message and follow practices that are completely acceptable to all. This is a natural outgrowth of a denominational complex, and is a natural consequence of the assumption of human authority.

(4) Open Membership. As objectionable as are the three foregoing, Open Membership is the least desirable of all, primarily because it is so very obviously a complete departure from the Scriptures, and because it is easily observable. I need not define the term except to say that it simply means the receiving of the unimmersed into our fellowship and counting them as one of us. More precisely, it is the practice of by-passing baptism as we know it in the Scriptures. This has developed in such an insiduous fashion that it deserves careful attention.

This practice is not new, it goes back a long time. As early as 1873 L.L.Pinkerton was advocating open mem-- bership. He was one of the earliest if not the first to openly agitate (though it was not yet practiced) for this plan.

In 1892 or 1893 the Lenox Avenue Church in New York City, M. Philputt, minister, was the first church to publicly and openly practice open membership. The influence of Union Theological Seminary is seen in this.

In 1895 the Cedar Avenue Church in Cleveland, Ohio began the practice of open membership. By way of sending up a trial baloo n, they sent an offering to the Foreign Christian Missionary Society with the idea that if the offering was received it would be tantamount to FCMS endorsment of the practice. The offering was returned. The Foreign Christian Missionary Society would have nothing to do with the practice nor with churches who were known to practice it.

In 1896 the Campbell Institute was organized for the purpose of promoting liberal Christianity. You may ask what this has to do with open membership. If you are acquainted at all with this organization and its membership you will know that it had a great deal to do with the problem of open membership.

In 1900, W. C. Morro of Melbourne, Australia, wrote advocating open membership (Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History, p. 433).

In 1901, W. T. Moore suggested the "London Plan" of open membership, which was a form of open membership, that is, a way in which it could be done to the satisfaction of everyone (or so Moore thought).

In 1903, the University Church (then Hyde Park church) of Disciples of Christ in Chicago inauguraged full-blown open-membership. Edward Scribner Ames was minister and boasted of his church being the oldest open membership church among the Disciples (Garrison and DeGroot, p. 434) (In a recent "Visitor's Guide" to the University Church this statement was made: "Entrance into the membership of the church is a simple procedure. Since the emphasis if placed less upon the manner of gaining admittance into its membership and more upon the actual living of the Christian life, all who earnestly desire to share in the life and work of University Church are welcomed into it. The Disciples of Christ traditionally practiced immersion, making it a requisite for membership. However, critical New Testament study combined with the surrender of ecclesiastical authority and the recognition of the divisive effect of interpreting an ancient custom as a divine command tend to relax adherence to the tradition in this as in many other Disciple churches."

In 1906, the Monroe Street Church in Chicago, with Charles C. Morrison as minister, accepted the "London plan" of open membership.

In 1908, the appointment of Guy W. Sarvis, assistant to Ames at the Hyde Park Church, to the foreign mission field created a furor. There were numerous meetings held in which Sarvis was interrogated by several of the brethren, not only of the missionary organizations but also by men who were opposed to his going on the ground that he had been in an atmosphere of open membership and that such practice ought not to be introduced or tolerated on the mission field. Despite opposition Mr. Sarvis was sent to the field. Later, in 1921, he said: "There is probably not a missionary in China who has any conscientous scruples against extending the fullest fellowship to unimmersed Christians. If that is open membership, we all believe in it."

In 1909, so far as I can find out, the first open advocacy of open membership from a Convention platform among our people, was made by Samuel Harden Church, an attorney from Pittsburgh. This was at the Centennial Convention, meeting at Pittsburgh in 1909. For this Church received resounding hisses and a considerable vote of disapproval, for the most part, of the entire assembly. (See Editorial, Christian Standard, Nov. 6, 1909, pp. 1946-47).

In 1911, George Baird, a missionary in China, adressed the China Mission and openly and ardently advocated the practice of open membership. He was rebuked for it, but remained on the field. In a letter to C.C. Morrison, published in the Christian Century, he told the full story and detailed what was going on in China.

In 1914, the Northern California Convention became the first state body to exclude a church because of its open membership practices. This was the Berkeley, California Church.

In 1919, Mr. Baird addressed the China Mission at Kuling and again advocated the practice of open membership. The convention, at the close of his message, voted to approve officially the practice of open membership, there being no dissenting votes. Baird later said that, at this time, all the mission stations in China except one were practicing open membership. Mr. Bert Wilson, United Christian Missionary Society, denied the Baird claim, and entered into a heated correspondence with C. C. Morrison, then editor of the Christian Century, declaring the "statements absolutely untrue to the facts." Mr. Morrison replied: "Not a single statement of Baird has been disputed

by the China Mission. "Mr. Morrison went on to say: Neither Conservatives, nor Liberals, so called, can endure the spectacle of the United Christian Missionary Society continuing to assert what is not true, and to deny what is true." (Christian Century, Feb. 23, 1922)

In 1920, the Medbury Resolution was passed at the General Convention. This came as a result of a continuing questioning and a rising crescendo of disagreement with the policy of open membership as it had been allegedly practiced on the Foreign mission field. This resolution read: "Resolved: That this statement of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society voicing, as we believe it does, the heart of the brotherhood as to the points at issue, be submitted by the United Society to men and women engaged in service under their direction, whose teaching or practices have been called in question, to the end that their open avowal of loyal support of such an expression the thought and life of our brotherhood may restore in the hearts of all complete confidence in them, or, if in the liberty of conscience such an avowal is impossible, may indicate the wisdom of a prompt cessation of service as representatives of the Disciples of Christ." This resolution was interpreted away by the Board of Managers of the UCMS, thus laying the ground for another.

Two years later (1922) in order to bring the matte to the forefront, to put it before our people, and to ge an expression from our people the Sweeney Resolution wa passed by the Convention. It read: "As a purely administrative policy, the Board of Managers of the United Christian Missionary Society announces the following: In harmony with the teachings of the New Testament as understood by the Board of Managers, the United Christian Missionary Society is conducting its work everywhere on the principle of receiving into the membership of the churches at home and abroad, by any of its missionaries, only those who are immersed, penitent believers in Christ.

"Furthermore, it is believed by this Board of Managers that all of the missionaries and ministers appointed and supported by this Board, are in sincere accord with this policy, and certainly it will not appoint and indeed it will not continue in its service anyone known by it to be not in such accord. It disclaims any desire to do otherwise."

Both this resolution and the Medbury resolution were carried by huge majorities in the Convention, thus expressing the Convention's desire to have no part with this practice. This resolution was also by-passed by interpre-

tation. Mr. E. K. Higdon authored the phrase "invasion of private convictions" in reference to its interpretation (see Corey, p. 88)

In 1925, the Peace Resolution was passed at the Oklahoma City Convention. The heart of it is this: "...that no person be employed by the United Christian Missionary Society who has committed himself to belief in or practice of open membership that if any person is now employed by the U. C. M. S. who has committed himself to believe in or practice of open membership, he shall be dismissed as an employee of the United Christian Missionary Society..." (Corey, p. 105)

This resolution was strenuously opposed by the officials of the United Society. However, R. A. Long, whom Corey describes as "one of our leading business men who had been most generous in his support of the brotherhood's missionary and educational work, having personally given a million dollars to the Men and Millions Movement", made a most sensible and telling speech in favor of the resolution. "If you are sending men to the foreigh field who only believe in immersion as baptism, and if there is none there who is teaching contrary to that who do you object to the resolution and it was carried almost unanimously. This resolution was also interpreted away. Mr. Corey reports it thus: "The Board of Managers finally interpreted "comitted ....to belief in" at its St. Louis meeting (Dec. 2,3, 1925) "as not intended to invade the right of private judgment, but only to apply to such an open agitation as would prove divisive". (Corey, p. 105). This was not at all satisfactory to our people at large. So, in 1926, at the Memphis Convention, the scuttling of the "Peace Resolution" caused many to rise up in wrath and disassociate themselves from the General Convention and the Missionary organizations. Many had been trying for years to reform the existing organization so that the Scriptural teaching would prevail. Seeing that this was impossible, a large group met at Memphis in the Pantages Theater. At that gathering a committee was selected to make arrangements for a separate convention. Such was arranged and the first "North American Christian Convention" was held in Cadle Tabernacle, Indianapolis, Indiana in 1927.

The real point of issue is this, Were such practices (of open membership) really carried on, on the mission field. In 1922, the missionaries at Luchowfu made these statements: "You asked me if I believe in open-membership, and I said that I do. You asked me if I believed in sprinkling, and I said I could sprinkle a grown person." (Mrs. A. C. (Marguerite Harmon) Bro) "Out here it is different. If what we do in Luchowfu is open membership, I am heartily in favor of it" (Miss Lillian Collins). "....They (the unimmersed) become an integral part of the actual working

church, and no distinction is made between them and the baptized" (George Baird). "I am in favor of open-membership" (Miss Lyrel Teagarden). "Mr. Chien, an unimmersed preacher st Chuchow was invited to preach for us (at Luch, owful), but Dr. (I. Elliott) Osgood would not permit him to leave them (Chuchow was Osgood's station). We knew he had never been immersed, but we called him anyway." (George Baird). "...on account of the trouble in America, we shall have to put them (the pious unimmersed) on the social list. I did not put them on a separate list, but put 'Social member' after their names" (Frank Garrett).

The point that these quotations make is that open membership was practiced on the mission field. Incidentally, these same people had signed the statement that they were not committed to nor practicing open membership as a result of the Medbury Resolution. It is this sort of perfidy, dishonesty, and double-dealing that turned many away from the organization.

Now this simply gives us some facts as to the development of this plan which is totally unacceptable to those of us who are called "independent". We believe that it is a departure from the Word. We have already had stated to us very clearly the concept of the New Testament Church as held by our fathers. That, in itself, is relatively unimportant. The question is, What does the New Testament teach about the Church?, and that is that which we ought to accept. We have argued with great care and validity and tremendous power and have been able to call the attention and have the approval of others as the meaning of baptism itself. We need not go over this field. It has been amply demonstrated that immersion is baptism and that that is required of any penitent believer in order to put on Jesus Christ. To abandon this concept is a point of difference which, unless we can bring ourselves back to the pattern of the Word, becomes an insurmountable obstacle, a point of no return. It is to be hoped, therefore, that we are capable of restudying the Word of God as our fathers did with the desire to know the truth and have the courage to walk in it.

Allow me to make two final quotations which point up this problem in greater detail. In 1932, a paper by E. S. Ames, entitled "A Philosopher Appraises the Disciples of Christ", was reviewed in the Christian Standard. Ames wrote:

> "No graduate of any of the leading seminaries of this country can believe in the fundamentalist doctrines, but many have felt it necessary not to make public their modernistic

convictions. No such graduate could consistently advocate union upon the basis of faith, repentance, and baptism. Most of them are very little aware of the philosophical background of the "Disciples", and therefore, become easily persuaded that it is mainly their acquaintance and opportunities among the "Disciples" that justify working among them.

"For example, number of ministers are convinced that what is known as open membership is desirable in the light of the larger teaching of Jesus, and in the interest of religion and yet go on complacently in the orthodox way. No university-educated man today can believe that baptism is essential to salvation. Baptism at its strongest is a habit; at its best it is a symbol; and at its worst is a mere form." (p. 943, CHRISTIAN STANDARD, 1940)

Frederick D. Kershner in his essay; "Open Membership and the Restoration Movement" in the CHRISTIAN STANDARD, says: ... "With but few exceptions, wherever the open-membership plan has been tried, it has either proved to be of negligible value, or else has prompted dissention and division more than it has promoted union.... It may seem peculiar that in open-membership churches, where the practice has been introduced without serious friction, it should have attracted so few additions from Pedo-baptist churches. The facts of the case are, however, that there is no special inducement for a Pedo-baptist to enter an open-membership church. He gets no more than he would get where he is, and why should he change?"

"let it suffice to say that the open-membership propaganda has fostered the spirit of disunion far more than it has promoted the spirit of union among the churches which hold to the Restoration plea. It is mistaken in theory and destructive in practice. The more influence it secures, the more certainly our progress will slacken, and the plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity become shorn of its effectiveness and power." (p. 944 CHRISTIAN STANDARD 1940)

CONCLUSION:

There is no evidence that the Disciples are concerned about the schism which they have caused in the body of Christ. The number of open-membership churches are on the increase apparently. There is a continued disregard for the Scriptures as the authority for doctrine, practice and life. It would appear that further federation effort is in the offing, and mergers are hinted at and may well be consummated with non-immersionist groups.

The position of the Independents may well be summed up in the language of Elijah when King Ahab queried: "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" "and he answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim." (I Kings 18:16 b,18)

"The New Testament Church as a Pattern"

THE DISCUSSION GROUP over which I presided was asked to discuss the question, "The New Testament Church to What Extent a Pattern for the Church in Our Time?" About 16 or 18 persons attended this discussion, and although it was quite difficult for us to stay with the subject assigned to us, we had a profitable session.

In order to introduce the theme, I as discussion leader recalled the attention of the persons present to some of the slogans used by the Restoration fathers that seemed to me to bear upon the subject at hand. Some of them were: "Where the scriptures speak, we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." and "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." and "We seek to restore the New Testament Church in its doctrine, its ordinances and its life."

Apparently, our fathers who were the originators of the movement known as the Restoration Movement believed that there were certain patterns within the New Testament that were essential to the life and the unity of the Church of Christ and which constituted a basis of revealed truth upon which all Christians would be able to unite.

In order to stimulate some discussion, I then asked specific questions such as: "is there a pattern in the New Testament as far as faith goes that is binding upon the Church in all ages?" Considerable discussion followed. Someone asked, "What do you mean by faith?" and after some discussion, we concluded that what we meant by faith was belief based upon evidence. In other words, it seemed to be the consensus of opinion of the majority of the persone who were present in the discussion group that the New Testament specifies what one must believe about Jesus in order to be a Christian. The statement of Peter, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God," was agreed to be the statement of faith, as revealed in the New Testament to which all Christians subscribed. It was quite well agreed among us, I am confident, that we could require nothing more and nothing less of people who expressed a desire to become a Christian so far as faith goes. However, I am confident that a discussion of definitions would have led us in different directions ifwe had been prone to inquire as to what that statement of faith meant to all who were present.

As discussion leader, I then asked the question, "Is there a pattern in the New Testament politically speaking that is binding upon the Church in all ages?" There were differences of opinion as concerned this theme. It involved

some discussion of the nature of the church and the relationship between local congregations. Some of us thought that each New Testament congregation was a complete unit within itself, having its own duly elected officers who were responsible within the confines of the local congregation. Others believed that the New Testament church did speak collectively; that there was a voice that was the voice of the Church universal. There followed quite a discussion of the authority of church officers, and the relationship of church officers to the congregation that elected them and to other congregations.

After quite a lengthy discussion of organizationalism, as such, it seemed to me as group leader, that we are getting far off the base of our original discussion.

I recall that one young preacher said something like this: "I am a Disciple, and I am cooperative. I believe I ought to support the brotherhood agencies, but I don't like this open membership that we hear so much about any more than the Independents like it. At first I couldn't believe that it exitsed, but now I know it does exist. Where does this leave me?"

The young man seemed to speak the voice of a number of persons who were present who were unhappy with the trends toward theological liberalism and institutionalism that seemed to characterize the program of the Disciples in our time, but who believe in cooperation and feel that there ought to be some organization.

During the entire unity meeting, most of the discussion seemed to be centered around the problem of organizationalism. If I may be allowed a personal comment, I would like to say that I don't believe organizationalism is the real issue that tends to divide us. True, there are some Independents who feel that any organization apart from the simple New Testament pattern for the local organization, is unscriptural and wrong; just as there are some folk who believe that the musical instrument is unscriptural and wrong; however I don't believe this view characterizes the vast majority of the Independents today. It would be difficult to deny the Church the right to appoint simple committees or to create simple organizations to assist in the carrying out of the commission under which the church lives and labors and build a case for that position by reference to the New Testament. Certainly there must be cooperation, and some simple organizations must be created to make cooperation feasible; however, when such organizations have been created, they are servants of the Church that created them and cannot usurp the prerogative of supervision. Some of us feel that our experience with organizationalism has not been too good, but nevertheless, organi-

zationalism is not the basic problem that divides the Disciples.

Our late Brother Welshimer used to say of people who referred to us as Campbellites, "The only fellow who refers to us as Campbellites any more is the fellow who wears a handle bar mustache and a celluloid collar." It seems to me that folk who believe that organizationalism is the basic issue that divides our brethren belongs in the same category. He simply does not understand the Independents.

We had a good discussion. It was hard to stay on the subject because so many interesting facets presented themselves to our attention, but at least we learned to know each other better, and when we learn to know each other better, we discover that there is probably more unity among us than we had previously believed because after all, unity is a matter of faith, and some of us dare to believe that the great bulk of the people who comprise the membership of local congregations of Christian churches are united in their faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and have been properly baptized into Christ. They are confused about the issues of organizationalism, open membership and so forth which are actually diversionary skirmishes that distract their attention from the real issues at stake: but when they are able to see the issue cleary they will decide rightly about all of the major problems that face the Restoration Movement today,

LESTER H. FORD,
Discussion Group Leader.

What is the relative importance of the goals? Are we divided by these goals, or emphasis on them?

Our group agreed that "as a matter of history our movement originated in a plea to Christians to unite by a Restoration of the New Testament church unto the conversion of the world to Christ" (Report on The Commission to Restudy, 1948 p. 7). This group was agreed that the "two concepts of unity and restoration have been from the beginning, held together in a parity of mutual dependence. The fathers believed that they had discovered in The New Testament the pattern of the true church, that this pattern was authoritative for the Church of Christ in all time, and that Christian unity could be attained only by its restoration." (Ibid., p. 14)

The group was pretty much in agreement that now there exists tension in regard to these concepts and that all do not hold them "together in a parity of mutual dependence." The group would agree with the Commission on Restudy: "Some among us maintain that these two conceptions....must be held together, essentially unchanged, in the form in which we traditionally conceived them. It is affirmed that Christian unity is possible only on the basis of the restoration of the primitive church in this form." (Ibid., p. 14)

"Others among us are content to abandon the concept of the restoration of the primitive church and center our emphasis upon union." (Ibid., p. 14)

Of course we recognize that this is undoubtedly an over-simplification, and many in our movement would not fit exactly into either of these alternatives.

In our discussion we became involved in definition of terms. What is unity; what is restoration? The question of authority was seen to be crucial. Is the New Testament really authority and obsolute? Our definitions of unity and restoration depend upon our viewpoint in regard to the authority of the New Testament.

Not only are we divided in our attitude toward unity and restoration, we are divided over the attitudes taken toward uniting with other communions.

Some felt that more immediately the problem of restoration is our basic problem. What should be restored? One suggestion was that we demand for minimal fellowship only those express commands and approved precedents of our Lord and His Apostles as seen in the New Testament Scriptures. Another

suggestion was that through restoration unity will come, since unity is a mark of The Church of Christ.

Only one suggestion was made in regard to our internal unity and that was to extend to all groups the right to work as they wish if our disharmony is a matter of method of expediency.

CHARLES GRESHAM,
Discussion Group Leader

IN FAITH, UNITY

This group had 27 present, representing four states, both sexes, laymen and ministers, cooperatives and independents.

The questions to which we addressed ourselves were : Can we be united in faith unless we agree to a statement of what we believe? In other words must we have a creed? In what items of faith must we agree in order to unite? What is the minimal statement of faith?

We defined faith for purposes of discussion as saving faith, or the test of fellowship (and also of followship) in the body of Christ; the commitment of each individual to Christ as Lord and Saviour.

We defined unity as the oneness we are, and have been attempting to urge upon the denominational world in order to recover the New Testament unity of the body of Christ. We are agreed that whatever principle of unity we hold out to others outside our brotherhood, must be able to work unity within the brotherhood. If we cannot be united as a brotherhood, we have nothing to say about unity in ecumenical circles or anywhere else. And if we have nothing to say about unity we're through!

This point has been too long ignored. There are those who are so anxious to fellowship with other Christians that they are willing to make large concessions to outsiders, but not to others within the brotherhood.

One question which was raised kept recurring: Does unity involve compromise of basic convictions? (i. e. of saving faith)? Our group agreed that, rather unity depends upon basic convictions. Therefore we must shift the statement of necessary agreement to a minimal statement of Faith.

We took note of the fact that Peter's confession has always been assumed as sufficient as such a statement. This confession contains two primary items: The Lordship and Saviourhood of Jesus. The question was raised then --Can this be interpreted away? The general feeling of our group was that it could not be, since it is based on historic fact. The facts may be accepted or rejected, but Authority to command and expect obedience cannot be eliminated from Lordship.

It was at this point that the problem of baptism arose --Is baptism a necessary item of faith? The answer given is, Yes, to this extent:

It is a command of Christ and is the first visible act of obedience to His Lordship. We discussed the passage on Faith and Works found in James 2. If baptism be considered a work, it must be a work without which faith is dead.

2. Whether or not it needs to be stated in a creed, it should be understood that baptism is the normal response to the confession of Lordship of Jesus, as repentance is the normal response to accepting Him as Saviour. It was called to our attention that this was the procedure in New Testament conversions: faith in Lordship and Saviourhood became stimuli to responses of obedience in baptism (and life) of those who were penitent.

3. It was also brought out that the church is commanded, through the great commission, to teach, baptize and teach further. The Church cannot treat baptism as optional matter, it must obey the Lord's command. The church cannot compromise baptism without compromising His Lordship.

4. Each local congregation is the ecumenical church in that locality. To be a member of the local church is to be ideally a member of the total body of believers in Christ. The local church, therefore does not have the right to set its own terms of membership which might be challenged when members transfer to another congregation. This is a weakness of the open membership policy. The unimmersed member may never be challenged as to the validity of his faith of obedience to Christ in the local community, but let him move to a new area, and he will be challenged. The local church needs to pursue such a policy of membership that free exchange of members can take place without compromise of faith or baptism.

We also discussed the question: Is conformity (or uniformity) or cooperation as defined in the limited sense of single agency support, a necessary item of faith? Only one person in our group would say so The rest were agreed that:

1. Cooperatives and independents are here to stay, legitimately or not. Neither has any intention of capitulating to the other. Each needs to recognize the status of the other and quit fighting. The work should be considered as complementing rather than competing.
2. It is my opinion that what each now expects of the other is capitulation or conformity. The cooper-

atives expect the independents to repent of independency and in their union. The independents too often expect the cooperatives to unite in a theology of faith and not merely in the basic items of faith as found in Peter's confession.

3. The question is not whether we shall have or not have organization and/or cooperation. It is adreed that organization with control in the hands of the churches, rather than in the agencies or persons, is necessary and that this demands coop--eration; but in a broader sense than is usualy defined.

Are we going to have to add anything to the question we ask our converts? Up till now we have been satisfied with the items of Peter's confession. Now are we going to have to ask also, how the convert believes and proposes to act with regard to matters of missionary method, support, publications read, etc. We do not believe that these are matters of Unity in Faith.

James B. Carr
Discussion Group Leader

"In Opinions, Liberty"

How much liberty can we allow and remain united? How much liberty can we allow in requirement for church membership? How much liberty can we allow in missionary support? What items are expedient?

First, let me state the obvious in saying that we did ot solve our dilemma, but like all the other discussion groups, when we did not have the right answers we did ask the right questions.

In opinions, we must have liberty, but unbridled liberty is impossible, even in the local church. This results only in anarchy. Our liberty must be self-limited for the sake of harmony. No liberty is possible on what the Lord has commanded, but we have considerable liberty in how we implement his commands. He said, for instance, to evangelize; He didn't say just how. The scriptures exhort, "Forsake Not the Assembling of yourselves together." We are not told when or where or given any details. The Lord's Supper is commanded, "This Do!" But one cup, one loaf, or many cups and individual crackers are matters of opinion. We have specific qualifications for elders and deacons, but nothing on conducting the affairs of the local congregation beyond "decency and order." This allows liberty and diversity of pattern at this point. Jesus said to "go to all the world", but he never heard of the terms "Independent" and Cooperative."

Our blind spots make interesting comparisons. For instance, those among us who are strictest on church membership are most unsystematic on missionary methods, while those of broadest views on church membership are most insistent on specific missionary channels.

The problem of liberty in church membership kept running into the same dead end in our discussion. Who can limit another's liberty? How do you disfellowship an open membership Church? How do you cast out the Independents? What do you do with the unimmersed, regular worshipper in the local church? Do you order him out or welcome him to the fellowship of discovery? What is to be gained by disfellowshipping him? Who judges finally, as to "Where the scriptures speak and where they do not?" Who sets the test of fellowship? The individual? The church? Does any person or church have the liberty to break the fellowship? Is not heresy of the heart worse than any heresy of the head? Can the stronger brother remain faithful to his Lord if he withdraws from his supposedly weaker brother?

Vested interests lie at the heart of many of our differences. If some way were found to regulate these interests by the churches, much of our problem would be gone. A delegate convention of spirit-filled people could call all vested interests to task for divisive efforts. If the family is in a constant fight, is divorce the only answer?

We must agree to diversity within unity. Uniformity is not essential; fellowship is. We must know each other, meet together, talk together, pray together. The holy spirit could solve our whole problem. More spirit of the law along with the letter of the law would reduce tensions. A plan for getting together more often is essential. If each of our conventions might meet every other year, on alternate years, or meet at the same place on consecutive weeks, we might get to know each other better. More consultations like this one are needed. We must communicate. The most encouraging fact today is that we are all concerned about John 17.

The issues which separate us are not new. Personally, I have watched them since I was a student at Johnson Bible College, and now that I am associated with the Kansas Christian Missionary Society, I see the same unchanging issues. I feel a great deal like the Scotsman, probable a new light, Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian, who said, "I sometimes wish we were all heathen so we could live together like Christians!"

W.L. McEver
Discussion Group Leader

"Local Church Autonomy"

How far does it reach: In Doctrine to be Believed--Can one church determine the doctrine of another? In method of missionary work?

It is impossible to put into writing the discussions of this group. There were about 20 persons in the group and there were a few more independents than cooperatives. Almost all of the discussion was kind and earnest.

More time was consumed discussing doctrine than any other subject. This discussion centered about the Gospel. After many suggestions it was rather generally agreed that preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was the center of the Gospel. One insisted that it was God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Apparently there was no disagreement over taking the New Testament as the authority for doctrine.

Freedom was discussed for some time. It was finally agreed by most of the group that our freedom includes freedom to be wrong, as well as freedom to be right. Without this privilege, there is no freedom at all. It was hard, at first, for some to allow the possibility of error in order to have freedom.

LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY

Local Church Autonomy was generally accepted. It was reasoned if one church infringes on the right of another church in regard to one doctrine, another would interfere in regard to another doctrine. This would destroy local autonomy.

Keeping pure New Testament doctrine was the major concern. It was agreed that the Roman Catholic Church had kept her faith pure (unchanging)-- this was achieved by the authority of the Roman Church and there was no freedom. It was agreed that we must keep our faith by some other method. In trying to find a way it was suggested that we should use exertation and preach the truth. Persuasion was thought a valid procedure. We came to no adequate way to enforce spiritual beliefs and still keep our freedom.

It seemed agreeable to all that our historic position on Local Autonomy should be maintained as a necessity. The foregoing came in spite of the fact that it was agreed that the council in Jerusalem was called to decide on circumcision. (Acts 15:6-22). It seemed to some that any doctrinal

position that is divisive or that makes members that cannot be freely exchanged from church to church, should have some kind of a conference to decide on what should be practiced. Then the question arose as to how to enforce the decision. No agreement was reached. Some of the group agreed that the conference in Jerusalem gives us a pattern of procedure. At least one felt that in matters of local autonomy some churches go entirely too far when they go beyond what Christ commanded and what the inspired apostles taught. It was observed that authority can only extend as far as we can communicate.

Some felt that doctrine is not much of a problem for most churches accept the New Testament as the authority of our Lord. Others felt that liberalism was to blame for our division. All agree in the priesthood of believers - or priesthood on behalf of all believers.

Some held that unimmersed believers of denominations, although admitted to communion, could not be considered Christians even if they were bearing the fruits of Christianity. Some held that a Christian is one who has obeyed the New Testament as he understands it and is not to be judged by other Christians. One read Alexander Campbell's definition of a Christian; "But who is a Christian?..... Every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, repents of his sins, and obeys his Lord all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will." Some resented this definition and said, we think Christ is a better authority. One said, "fellowship must be based upon speaking the same thing. There is only unity where there is affinity of minds." Others said that there has always been a wide variety of beliefs among us. A Layman said: "If I tie my faith to doctrines, 269 other churches are wrong. If I tie my faith to JesusChrist other than doctrine, I can fellowship with all peoples that follow Christ."

In Church Membership

It was agreed that Christ adds members to his church. One person told of two persons coming to Missouri from a UCMS church in Kansas who had not been baptized. Another person told of one person coming to his church from an independent church in Kansas who had not been immersed. The group faced the problem and tried to decide what should be done to enforce scriptural practices. On churches who practice open membership, four solutions were proposed by members of the group.

1. We can deny that they are Christian churches. Sister ~~chruches~~ can withdraw from them.

2. The problem is with the State secretaries. They should not recognize those who are unscriptural in their practices.

3. All should assume the responsibility of telling churches of their error. Tell them what the bible teaches about their mistakes, especially when those mistakes relate to doctrines that are essential. Rather than to tell them what they think, they should tell them what the Bible teaches.

4. We must teach Jesus Christ as we believe it.

Then it became necessary to again face the question, who decided what is right? This was never decided, except that several felt that it is obvious as to what the New Testament teaches and one felt that anyone who does not do what the New Testament teaches has bad faith. Then another asked if it is bad faith on the part of a Methodist, Presbyterian or Episcopalian when they do not do exactly what the New Testament teaches according to our interpretation. The answer was not very definite, but it tended toward believing that it is bad faith. Most of the group did not agree with this idea of bad faith.

Some believed we should preach the whole Gospel in love and let God be the judge as to who has acted in bad faith.

One insisted that the tragedy of our teachings and practices of baptism is that in entirely too many cases, baptism becomes an anti-climax to conversion and people are dipped in water but are not immersed into Jesus Christ. And until we actually get people into Christ they are not Christians regardless of the physical acts. A plea was then made to make baptism a climax to conversion using plenty of time for every candidate to actually understand and enter into it with real surrender and committment to Christ.

In Methods of Missionary Work

Some felt that cooperation is synonymous with the United Christian Missionary Society.

Another pointed out that there is cooperation among the independent churches--examples were given.

It was also pointed that this cooperation is stricter in its requirements and it is actually controlled cooperation.

In at least one case it was thought that it was purely a matter of missionary method rather than difference of faith that divides us.

It was pointed out that a person in a state or national position has far greater influence than a minister in a local church.

Often the question arose, how can the churches be controlled? By what power can we enforce decisions? Some felt that the basis is that of Democratic procedure. The election of the right person to offices. The question then arose, why does the state secretary allow an open membership man to be elected president of a State Convention? Another explained that the State Secretary was not on the nomination committee and probably did not even know whom the committee was presenting.

The group was reminded that basically our brotherhood had two planks in her platform for unity:

The first plank was to accept doctrines that are universally accepted by all the churches. The second plank was to accept universal doctrines that are scriptural. This practical plan still has validity.

It was the desire of some that we shape a resolution for the International Convention. There was not enough time to write such a resolution; therefore, one person was asked to prepare such a resolution. It follows:

"Whereas, the year of Our Lord, 1959 is the 150 anniversary of the Declaration and Address, one of the most important statements on the unity of the church and a document which has great historical meaning for the movement of which we are a part;

"Therefore, that the International Convention of Christian churches assembled at Denver, Colorado use this historic occasion to reaffirm to the cause of uniting the divided Church;

"And that we commit ourselves firmly to those things which have been, and are becoming more and more, the guiding principles of unity in the church universal; such as:

"No creed but Christ" The Sonship and Lordship of

Christ being the belief to which we subscribe.

"Christians only but not the only Christians"

"The New Testament our book of faith and practice."

"In Essentials Unity, in non-essentials liberty-in all things Charity" - these essentials being rather clearly stated as:

(1) believers baptism into Christ.

(2) remembering the Lord Jesus by the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper

"the priesthood of believers and for believers"

No other group has ever carried this belief to its logical conclusion though many preach it.

"The autonomy of the congregations" - realizing inter-dependence of congregation and responsibilities to the church.

In the Plenery Session it was suggested that we send this to both the International Convention and the North American Convention.

Finally, it was decided that this is a consultation meeting and not an official meeting to draw resolutions and thus take the form of another official group; therefore, it was decided to leave such resolutions to individuals and churches.

DYRE CAMPBELL,
Discussion Group Leader.

Question: "Is Cooperation Essential to Unity?"

Consider whether we can be a United Brotherhood and do missionary work thru different agencies. If so---why --If not--why? What kind of unity are we seeking?

Group was composed of 21 persons; 12 from Kansas, 7 from Oklahoma, 2 from Missouri.

1. Section One - Ideas that kept coming up:

1. Some kind of unity is desirable and seems essential.
2. We must understand each other better to move closer toward greater unity in the brotherhood.
3. Some actual cooperation is necessary to unity, meaning that doctrinal unity is not enough.
4. We must do some things together.
5. Terms "Cooperative" and "Independent" must be much more cleary defined.
6. It was cautiously affirmed that we can have unity with freedom of agency support.
7. Active search for ways and means of fellowship was suggested as a way to more unity.
8. More and better education, communication, information about each other at all levels -ministerial, lay, agency--was suggested many times.
9. We should try as hard to improve our brotherfellowship as we try to improve our fellowship with the denominations.
10. Cooperation is a more efficient way to do missions in money matters; but sometimes zeal decreases?
11. There was total agreement that we should have a better attitude, kinder spirit on the part of each for all.
12. Unity does not imply complete conformity in details.
13. We should be cautious not to equate agency identification with fellowship in the brotherhood, nor the lack of identification with an agency, as exclusion from the brotherhood.
14. We should seek a unity based upon the New Testament; John 17, and etc.
15. Need a clarification of the term "brotherhood". Of believers (doctrinal) vs. support of certain agencies?
16. We must do more than just tolerate each other; we must know, appreciate, (perhaps persuade) and certainly love each other.
17. We should find areas, media of positive cooperation, where we can work together and get to know each other (much as this kind of meeting every year).

18. It was suggested that as disciples our interest in unity and cooperation should extend beyond the brotherhood--to bear our historic witness to unity of Christ's followers.
19. There was a strong impression that we should have the courage and the desire to attend and to fellowship in gatherings of our own people which are not in exact agreement with our own individual traditions, preferences, or methods of work.
20. The addresses and reports of the group-discussion leaders should be printed in quantity for wide distribution.

2. Section Two- suggestions for the future:

1. That we have another meeting such as this next year.
2. That on regional--area levels and at national levels we have over-lapping conventions so that all of our people can get acquainted with each other.
3. That we ask agency representatives and brotherhood leaders to engage in meetings for fellowship, conference, re-study, and etc.
4. That local communities and smaller area where branches of our brotherhood are close together find ways of working together in various ways.
5. That, as a way toward better understanding and more unity, we seek out ways of fellowship together in areas of agreement; that a better acquaintance can help us in areas of actual disagreement and misunderstanding.

R.G. Martin
Discussion Group Leader

TOPIC:

The place of Conventions and other organizations.

(Camps, Colleges, Publications, etc.) We have them now. Are these organizations "secondary loyalties" that divide us? How important are they?

Soon after the topic was read discussion started with the affirmation that these "dual" organizations were the result of rather than the cause of division. Although no specific cases were sighted there seemed to be agreement that this was true.

Statements were made to the effect that conventions are functional in the work of the "cooperatives" and therefore essental. That insofar as the church is human it needs some structure for fellowship beyond the local congregation.

I. Seeking to find.

Reasons for starting additional organizations produced a variety of opinions. Some stated that "Modernism" taught in colleges and practiced in churches and agencies was the reason. It was stated that the inability to teach doctrinal courses in cooperative camps and conferences led to the establishment of the Christian Service Camps. There were a number of persons present who had taught in both, some having used the same course outline and textbooks.

Personality factors were mentioned as a cause of additional conventions and organizations being formed.

The lack of acquaintance and understanding of each other was recognized as a strong factor in our division. It was evident by references to the message which had been given the Consultation that persons often hear what they expected to hear rather than what the speaker said.

The scripture was used by both sides to substantiate their position in at least one instance, even using the same passage to support both sides. (We might note that this is not new in that Paul and James did it with the old Testament long ago.)

II. Evils of supporting "dual organizations."

The evil accruing within our Brotherhood from attempting to support this "dual system" was presented in the following thoughts expressed:

(1) When the support of these organizations became a test of fellowship, they are then sinful and devisive.

(2) The loss of strength through division of witnessing, leadership, and funds.

(3) This situation becomes a seedbed of suspicion, questioning, envy, etc.

III. On What Did We Agree?

The group all agreed on the following three statements:

(1) These organizations (conventions, etc.) are necessary to the expression of a common fellowship beyond the local congregation.

(2) The "dual organizations" which we now have are a result of other differences.

(3) The present fact of these "dual organizations" does create "secondary loyalties" which tend to perpetuate division.

Items of disagreement were noted as "deep doctrinal" differences (both supposed and real); the nature of the Church; and "Open Membership".

IV. What Can We Do?

1. Two alternatives: either try to harmonize agencies or disagree and "get out".
The great majority favored the first.

2. Be willing to count as Brothers those who share in another group.

3. Pray diligently for the "Internal Unity" of the Christian Churches.

4. Encourage acquaintance and understanding through conversation, correspondence, and other means.

5. Hold another Consultation within a year.

'Denomination or Movement"

Our Areas of Discussion

Our area of discussion centered around the question, "Denomination or Movement?" with these specific questions suggested to us by the committee: Are we a "denomination?" If so, in what sense? Can we be a "movement" and have "organization?" What bearing on a "plea for unity?"

Defining "Nomination"

We tried to arrive at a meaningful definition of "denomination." Something like the following represents our effort. A denomination is a group, less than the whole of Christendom, which is recognized as separate and distinct by those outside its membership and self=consciously so recognized by those within its membership, having a distinguishing characteristic.

The suggestion was made that we of the Christian Church have a unique understanding of "denomination" in that the word as we use it carries an unfavorable connotation, which is not true as it is used by many other peoples. It was also suggested that our ministers have a different definition of "denomination" than our lay people understand and use. "Brotherhood" and "movement" are synonyms of "denomination" with many of our people.

Are We A Denomination?

After some discussion it was suggested that we use the term "denomination" in two senses and talk in two realms, the idealistic and the practical. Idealistically we are not a denomination; practically we are. Isn't this a practical necessity?, one asked.

That other people look at us as a denomination, it was generally agreed. But, are we a denomination in the eyes of God? Judged by ultimate standards, are we such? It was held by some that when we take from or add to what the Scriptures teach we become a denomination. When we are members by virtue of a New Testament faith and a New Testament confession of faith, wearing a New Testament name and under New Testament authority we are not divided from the church of the New Testament and are therefore not a denomination.

It was asked if any church that goes back to New Testament truth and standards in some phase of its faith and life is not in some true sense a New Testament church. We are not a perfect New Testament church in that we have not perfectly restored New Testament faith and life, and conceivably some

other bodies may have made a more nearly complete restoration than we. Are we not then self-righteous in applying denominational status to them while denying it for ourselves?

The idea was voiced that we may over-emphasize the concept of a perfect pattern for the church, in the blueprint sense, in the New Testament and that the centuries of life of the church as the "dwelling place of God in the Spirit" also has authority for the church today.

Are We a Movement?

We did not define movement with consiseness. We said that historically our people had often thought of themselves as setting in motion impulses for the unity of the people of Christ through the restoration of essential and original Christianity flowing into the thought and life of other segments of Christandom and there feasting and working for the fulfillment of the prayer of Christ and the intention of God. In this sense we have been and are a movement.

Movement and Organization

While we did not deal at length with the question, Can we be a "movement" and have "organization?" it was suggested that these are not mutually exclusive. but that "organization" sometimes makes "movement" effective. In ecumenical councils our "movement" would have no voice if there was no "organization." Through organization the "plea for unity" is so expressed that it is heard and leavens the thought and life of Christendom, when without organization Christendom would be unconscious of this witness and testimony.

Personal Reaction

Personally, I was amazed at the readiness of many in the group to freely admit to denominational status without apparent revulsion and the lack of interest of some in being involved in a movement seeking to influence the rest of Christendom. In both of these tendencies I believe we are unlike the fathers of the reformation of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

If, practically, we are a denomination, we are one dissatisfied with this status. To borrow Hampton Adams' expression, we are "a denomination that hopes to die", as "denomination", That the united Church for which Christ prayed may be a reality.

WALTER H. MOORE
Discussion Group leader

Manhattan Bible College Library
Manhattan, Kansas

DISCUSSION GROUP, CONSULTATION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY, WICHITA, KANSAS
Clifford Hauxwell, Chairman

Our committee met, we prayed, like Jacob we laid our heads upon a pillow of stone, saw the angels ascending and descending, we wrestled with the angel in a friendly way, but I am just a little bit afraid that we parted praying "that the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other." Our subject was "Baptism and Open Membership". With sub-questions, "Is there real difference among us?" "How essential is baptism?" By way of introducing the discussion, we presented these two basic questions: 1. Are we agreed that baptism is essential to salvation? 2. What is the relationship between salvation and church membership? We were agreed on some things with just a very, very minor reservation on the part of one or two on some very delicate shades of interpretation of our expression of our agreement.

These are our agreements: Agreed that baptism is taught and commanded in the New Testament as being essential to salvation. I might pause here to define terms a little bit, and I think we are all agreed on what we mean when we talk about Christian baptism. Our discussion group was agreed on it, I am sure. Immersion of a repentent believer with the accompanying gift of the Holy Spirit. That should be emphasized, I think. And we must hasten to say that we are not speaking of baptism as being all that there is to salvation, that as a very essential and integral part of God's plan of salvation. There was agreement as to how essential baptism is.

Secondly, we were agreed that the terms of salvation and terms of admittance to membership in Christ's church were one and the same in the New Testament. Do you understand what we mean? The requirements by the Lord for salvation were identical to the requirements in the New Testament for membership to Christ's church. We were agreed on that.

Number three. Agreed that the question of the practice of open membership and its possible repercussions across our brotherhood creates a real problem and a cause for division and said problem must be resolved before Christian unity may be achieved among us. I am thinking of internal unity. Again, we define a term and that is in respect to open membership. If there should be one here who does not understand what we mean, we mean the acceptance into a local congregation of an unimmersed member of some other congregation or denomination without requiring that person to be immersed. Acceptance of that person into full

membership, with full membership privileges, voting privi-ledges, and office holding privileges. That is our defini tion of open membership, or the free exchange of members, which is the modern term used for it. Now it was brought out in our discussion that this is definitely a problem in Kansas, (as it is in other states). It is a problem on the foreign mission field, and it is something we have to face if we are to resolve our differences and find Christian unity.

One of the members of our group stated definitely that in his district there are four churches that openly practice open membership. Another member of our group stated that in a conversation with the State Secretary from another state that this secretary estimated that 40% of the Christian Churches in the County Seat town in his state were open membership churches. We also were agreed that the United Christian Missionary Society is permitting continued support of autonomour churches on the mission field who have affiliated with the United Church and committed themselves to the practice of free exchange of members. We recognized that this is definitely a problem. We discussed the problems that are possible through this practice by one or more congregations or by mission church of open membership.

We discussed the problem arising when a member from a closed membership church moves into a community and affiliates with an open membership church and vice versa. There are some definite problems involved. I think we are pretty much agreed, with one or two dissenting votes of opinion, that our contribution to general Christian unity can be best made through adhering strictly to the New Testament teaching concerning baptism. We bordered on the realm of local autonomy in as much as it was relevant to our question.

Does the local church have the authority, we asked ourselves without bringing an answer, to adopt any policy that is contrary to the teaching of Christ or the precendent of the Apostle-led early church?

Now our two hours was up. This took 50 years to develop, we had two hours to discuss it, five minutes to report it, and we came up with no specific recommendations other than that we feel this merits further study. That with open hearts and open minds and prayerful souls, we give serious and sincere consideration to a re-examination of the Scriptures in this respect, and a careful study of what repercussions and attitudes our actions may have upon other people and congregations within our brotherhood.

SUMMATION*
John Greenlee

In the first place we should stand up and admit that this cannot be summerized by thumb-nail sketches. We cannot summarize the attitude which are here; 23 cannot summarize the prejudices which are yet with us. It is like the song that was so popular a few years ago --- "Huggin' and Chalkin'". You have to hug awhile, then chalk awhile, and go on from there. I think that is pretty much the position we are in in trying to summerize. You just cannot get your arms around it all at once, nor your mind. So we can only state some of the things which stand out as most pertinent from the things which have been said.

As far as personal reaction is concerned (and most of this falls in that category), one of the most interesting and amazing things that is visible in a gathering such as this is our lack of prior acquaintance; our failure to understand each other for what we really are and what we really do; and our own haste to pass judgment on what we think and what we think the attitudes of other pwople and other types of work might be. I thought last evening how much our being here together was like the stuation which you have all encountered in ministering, in which a husband and wife who have lived together for several years come together in your study. In talking you discover how very little they know each other. They have lived in the same house, have been doing about the same activities together, but they do not know each other, let alone love each other. The lack of love is often from the lack of understanding; the failure to communicate to each other what they think and feel, what their basic idea and philosophy really are. The picture and allegory might be carried farther. We had best get acquainted again. We had best renew an intimate friendship and acquaintance or we shall find ourselves truly in the court of divorce. We, as you know, are at the point of either getting together or admitting the chasm is too wide for us to cross. These are some reactions to our general attitude in this gathering in these last days.

Some of the things which I feel have not found adequate expression here: (1) I think that we have underestimated the concern the power and the interest of God to reunite us. I think that we have made a great deal of emphases of mechanical means for reunion, or union as the case may be, and have not laid heavy enough emphasis upon the fact that we are Christ's body, and, as such, have the very unique means of access to God through prayer. If we

* *The following summations were reproduced from a tape and will, therefore, not read as well as the previous prepared manuscripts.*

C.R.G.

Believe that God hears and answers prayer, then, surely, this should be one of the prize means by which our unity as a people is to be gained. The power of the Holy Spirit to work in His people, the power to work within His body surely must be reckoned with in a very realistic way.

(2) I feel that, perhaps, we have not found adequate expression for the reason for unity. We have spoken of unity, so very often, as an end in itself; that is, when we have attained unity we have arrived, so to speak. The point is that we want unity for the ulterior purpose - as Christ's prayer for unity so cleary states--that the world may believe that thou hast sent me". Unity, if it is seen as the means to this end, perhaps, brings us closer together with a common end in view; rather than struggling to attain only a unity here without being willing to mean that we want also to go beyond this unity to the seeking and saving of men outside the saving relationship of Jesus Christ. This is why we want unity: and I think this needs to be said to us and by us.

(3) One other thing that is significent because it is how we hesitate to criticize ourselves. How, for instance, those of us who are in sympathy with "independent" missionary work, etc. are hesitant and loathe to say that the "pat" stand of those in sympathy with the United Christian Missionary Society, etc. who defend this as if it were an infallible and perfect thing. I think self-examinatio.. needs to go on. I feel, perhaps, that we take ourselves too seriously sometimes, as if we could not see how other work and other attitudes are also correct.

(4) Then, this last comment concerning areas where we could find greater strength, which needs to be touched upon over and over again: What is our relationship to Jesus Christ, who is, by his very nature, authority and commend, the Head of the Body collective and our Lord and Master? I say this because I cannot help but feel that if we could once gain the place of humility of subjects of a King and could somehow get away from the concept of citizens in a voting democracy, we might better see our position as it really is in relationship to the Lord. He is Lord; He is Head of the Church; "that in all things He might have the <u>preeminence</u> , Paul says. I think this is important, because I think that we have reduced the office and authority of the Lordship of Jesus to almost a par with the voting body of the local congregation. They are not in the same catagory; they are not at the same level; and I think this needs spelled out for us more clearly!

Two or three other general areas: (1) We have dealt with the Church structurally. What is the nature of the

Church? I appreciated this word, that it is an "interdependent body". This certainly is true! In being interdependent it requires even of those who would feel most deeply about the matter of "independent" missions that they make some contribution to the Body from which they are drawing strength. Certainly there can be no isolation; in fact, there is no such thing as an "independent" congregation. West Side Christian Church is not "independent". Why do I know? Because we have drawn members from other congregations in this city and in the state. We have given members to other congregations. We have drawn upon the resources of universities and colleges We have drawn upon the resources of men whose lives have been contributed to by various agencies larger than an "independent" group. The point is that this term "Independent" has been taken too literally by both "independents" and "cooperatives". There seems to be some expression that some of us feel that we really are <u>independent</u>, <u>isolated</u>, <u>cut out</u>, and <u>apart</u>. If this is the actual state. what are we doing here?

This thought went around in my mind in regard to the interdependence of the Church. John Donne said: "No man is an island". No Church is an island! Then, the way Donne closes is interesting. I think, because it might be said of us too: "Never ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee".

Here is another aspect of interdependence. By what right may any local congregation break with the tradition the doctrine, the teaching and the fellowship of the church abroad and at large in its doctrine and receive to its membership those people who, admittedly, are going to be alien to the church at large", thus breaking with the interdependency of other Christian brethren without the consent, without any reference to or responsibility shown toward these other brethren? Is this not as sharp a break and violation of interdependency and breaking with the nature of the Church as is the accusation which says to display in our ministries and in our churches such an interchange of fellowship that those who have accepted Christ and been obedient to Him may not doubt their status in the relationship to other Christian brethren of like precious faith. I think that this is most important as it has happened both ways. Do you see what we are doing? We are displaying a cleavage; we are preaching a break; we are admonishing a separation among our own people. This is a violation of the nature and the interdependence of the Church as a brotherhood of believers, obedient in Jesus Christ.

(2) We have faced here the dilemma of authority. We have had it swing both ways and sometimes stop in the middle. We have said all authority rests in the congre-

gation. The Church speaks; God has spoken. We have said in effect, that in the literal pages of the New Testament is all authority. We have said, in the middle of these alternatives, that the church and the New Testament are authorities. The congregational automony which we have, we would want to maintain; and yet, somehow, we want a way by which we may collectively censure some other congregation. This is an interesting dilemma in which we find ourselves. We rebel -- the "independent" people particularly -- against the idea of a "super-Church", and yet there is nothing which we would like better, than to reach over and "burn" someone 'else's congregation for practicing open membership. Of course, this sort of thing cannot possibly exist because the very nature of the Church prohibits it. We claim that the New Testament is authority and that the New Testament is the authority for establishing local congregational autonomy; and then we go one step farther and say that by the authority of the congregation, given by the New Testament, we vote to violate the New Testament and practice open membership. It seems that the dog has chased his tail in a complete circle. The authority which puts us into existence has itself been denied.

We have a fear -- it has been expressed here -- of reducing the New Testament to a "blueprint", a "rule book". For myself, I do not so nearly fear an almost literal (though I avoid this in my own mind) view-point in regard to the New Testament being a "blueprint". We, I think, would rather rest upon a "blueprint" or "rule book" than, heaven forbid, just turn the thing loose to a completely humanistic ideal of what constitutes the Church, what constitutes salvation, etc.. If we have an alternative here, I think that, since there is only a vague and nebulous middle ground, we must fall back where the poor fellows who began this movement fell, that the authority rests in the Word of God. I fear that, if this seems revolting to some, I must find my position here.

It seems, then, that the "independents" seem to fear some over-organization, and the "cooperatives" seem to fear anything becoming final and crystallized, that there is nothing complete or absolute.

(3) Another area is in reference to historic positions. Are we a denomination or a movement? I am impressed with how very important it is that the terms which are used express what we are. I could take it a step farther. I do not think that we all think or mean the same thing when we use the term "denomination" or when we use the term "movement". I sense a certain desire, for the most part, for a sense of sophistication, and recognition, a certain erudition which we like to have seen in us as ministers. We fear being the representative of something less than a major denominational status. I think that we might not have been very successful ministers 1900 years ago, for we would have represented a very unpopular, very minor little group of

people at that time. It has been suggested that to be just a "Christian only", apart from sect-status, apart from denominational status, apart from even too deep a movement status -- we can carry that too far -- is quite difficult. That is an interesting reason for not doing it, isn't it? It has always been quite difficult, I have thought, to do the things which were worth the doing. We have the earmarks already of being a denomination. It was pointed out, from the conversation as related last night, how difficult it is right now to cross the line as far as the ministry is concerned. Once you are in and get the machinery oiled that you like to keep oiled, and you have made the contacts that you want to make, and you have the respect of the people who can do you some good and to whom you can offer a favor in return; then, it becomes a matter of more than a little bit of courage to try to step across the line, because you recognize that you are jeapordizing your bread and butter. This makes a difference to us! Neither group is free from this. There is machinery which exists just as truly in "independent" areas as exists in the "cooperative" areas for the promoting, the "patting on the back", and elevating of a man in position. We fear that somehow we might be ostracized by those whom we consider to be our own group and our own clan, and that we will be out in "Podunk Center" looking for a church because we have not said or done or radiated the right type of attitude toward someone or something, toward "independents", missions, conventions, schools or what have you.

(4) One other word concerning Unity and Restoration: What is the nature of the unity which we seek? I think the statement made this morning is quite true. Only unity of diverse methods can ever be. I have felt, ever since the deep impression made by T. H. Johnson of Manhattan Bible College, that it is possible, in fact desirable, that there be a fellowship which exists as Christian brethren higher than the fellowship of recognition of, cooperation with or opposition to agencies or what have you. I think there is a relationship as brethren which I have to you and which, whether you will recognize it or not, you have to me, which transcends how the mechanical work of my ministry and the church which I serve is done. If you are an obedient believer in Christ, and I am too; the two being equal to the same one are equal, so we are made brethren in Christ. The nature of this unity is a unity which is higher than the United Christian Missionary Society, higher than the attitude of "direct-support" missions. It is a unity which none of us would want at any lower level than the level of a unity as brethren; not in agency, not in school, not in attitude, but as brethren in Christ, If this is what we seek, why must we presume to

prove one method or another of missionary work as being the Biblical way in which it is to be done. No such proof exists; it is purely hypothetical. The brotherhood which we seek is going to be a brotherhood of diversity or it is not going to be united in any way at all. Perhaps we can put away the "straw man" of who spends the dollar best and come down to the point where our real trouble lies as far as our brotherhood and brotherliness in Christ are concerned.

Perhaps now we can see more clearly that one side has not all the truth; that there is no corner on the revelation which God has made to us. If no middle ground exists, what are we doing here? If there is no place in the middle, why did we gather at all? I think we had best find a middle ground or we are going to find two grounds so far apart that we have lost the middle and the unity for which we have gathered here. I think, too, that this unity must avoid a Roman Catholic attitude which is now prevalent in the world, which says, "Yes, we can have unity. You may repent and come back to us." How good and great and kindhearted we are in this attitude! This is not the unity which we shall find; we shall find a unity which, as I said before, transcends this mere matter.

Regarding the practice of open membership, which has been so thoroughly discussed, I only add these words: (1) It is opposed to the New Testament. It stands in opposition to the clear and concise teaching of the revealed Word of God. Brethren, that is how we got baptist in the first place -- because it was in the Word. This is why it came to be insisted upon; not because it was an invention of the Campbells, but because they felt that they could not conscientously preach and practice unless this were included. So we have it and if we oppose it, then, we oppose the Word which gave it to us.

(2) It is a hindrance and not a help to unity. I had an interesting conversation last evening with Dean England, whose book on baptism will be forthcoming. In Europe, you are aware, there is this great insistence upon believers' baptism, which has been growing, spurred on practicularly by Karl Barth. I am confident that if we will maintain -- in love and in kindness, without feeling that we have to pronounce anathemas on the unimmersed -- a positive position on baptism by immersion that others will soon come to this position. What an embarassing thing to have them arriving after we have left and having to retrace our steps again in another twenty years! I hope we will be here when they get here and have something to say about unity! Open membership opposes and is a hindrance to unity. It is a violation of the Church universal, a violation of brotherhood; for it assumes a unilateral decision regarding something about which the rest of the brotherhood is not consulted and -- about which they have not given their word -- on the part of one man or one individual congregation.

SUMMATION

Stephen J. England

I think one of the most useless things in the world is for me to get up here and tell you what you have been saying. I couldn't, and you wouldn't believe me even if I told you. If you don't know what you have already been saying there's no point in me reminding you of it. I want to give you rather some reactions of mine to what has gone on here--reactions that stem out of a number of circumstances. One of them is my deep and sincere concern about the matter of Christian unity, beginning at home. The second, and I would like to mention this not in the spirit of boasting of anything that may have happened to me out of my experiences in gatherings that have attempted to deal with Christian unity with other groups of Christians. And as I shall say in a little while, I find some amazing, encouraging, and discouraging similarities between this gathering and others I have attended. I have been interested in noting the areas of agreement. Mr. Parish pointed out yesterday that our people--this side or this--agree in general theologically with the position of Trinitarian Protestantism. There is nothing new about that. Pick up Isaac Errett's little pamphlet, Our Position, and he will tell you wherein we agree in general with those who call themselves Protestant. That has always been true, and we are agreed in those assertions: "God is our Father, of His infinite Love He redeemed the world through Jesus Christ our Lord. He calls us to redemption and gives us His Holy Spirit." We are agreed--on this side and on this--in regard to the specific heritage of history which is ours stemming from the Declaration and Address. We all desire the peace and unity of the people of Christ. We assert the primacy of the Scriptures for faith and life. We reject the authority of creeds as tests of fellowship. We, in general, have asserted our willingness to use organizations, and in this all of us are unlike the "Churches of Christ." I am not so sure how far this description would go. I speak of those assembled here for the most part because I am aware that there are those among the so-called "independent movement" who assert that missionary societies are forbidden by the New Testament. I am aware of that, as you are, but this group agrees on the valigity and rightfulness of organization.

I am interested also in observing the disagreements. If there had been no disagreements this meeting would have been the acme of futility: To come together and say that we agree in everything; therefore, we will

remain separate. I am not going to attempt to tell you all the disagreements that came up; they dealt, in part, with practice; they dealt with theory; they raised the question implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, "which organizations are to be used?" But did you note the ambiguity at one point, e. g., How essential is baptism? I am not going to make a speech on that. I am merely going to call your attention to this fact: We cannot at one and the same moment, say that baptism is essential to salvation, and that the unimmersed Methodist is a Christian. You cannot have it both ways. You can't do it! If that Methodist is a Christian, then baptism is not essential to his salvation, at least. Either that, or he is going to Heaven without being saved, which is a very interesting situation. And if there are no Christians save those who have been immersed in the form which the New Testament teaches, then your business and mine, my Christian brethren, is not Christian unity, but conversion of the heathen. Now we are a little ambiguous on that point, aren't we? We are repeating the cliches of orthodoxy, I fear, without investigating what we mean. We are ambiguous as to whether support of organizations--on this side and on this--is essential. We assert that it is not, and promptly say that we would not allow a minister who supports this organization to preach in this kind of a church. You can't have it both ways, brethren! You can't have it both ways. We are ambiguous at that point.

Now it seems to me that we are here in a remarkably similar situation with that which has developed within the ecumenical movement. I take it that we are at least friends enough that this double expression, "ecumenical movement," isn't regarded as exactly "cuss words" in this connection. For one reason or another I have been involved in gatherings of this sort and I have been selected by some process to represent our brethren. A lot of people would agree that that was a mistake, but like all facts of history, you can't remedy it now. It happened; you may regret it; but you can't change it. I was a member of the Joint Commission on Union set up by the Northern Baptist Convention and our International Convention, which over a period of a few years discussed the possibility of union with the Northern Baptists. Nothing came of it. I was designated to attend the Third World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund, Sweden, an international, interdenominational gathering. Out of my experiences here, and in other somewhat less formal and official gatherings, I have come to observe this development. We discovered how very much we had in common with these other groups of Christians. We found that out about the Northern Baptists. We found it out at Lund, Sweden. We have so very much in

common with them. We have this matter of a common faith, of the need of worship, and of a need of response in faith to God's redemptive outreach through Jesus Christ our Lord; and yet, agreeing that we agree in so much, we do not actually unite. Isn't that what we are doing here? We agree in so much, and we do not unite. In regard to the Baptists, for example (I am always getting letters--people assume I know a lot of things and can do a lot of things, and they are speedily undeceived as to that, but I like to get the letters), I noticed that there were assumptions on both sides which, so far as I can discover, were completely erroneous. The assumption on the part of our people that the Baptists practice baptism by immersion in order to make a person a member of a Baptist church and not in obedience to Christ. <u>They don't admit that</u>, and I suppose that they ought to know--its their baptism. They believe that you and I believe in "water salvation"--if you can just get them deep under, that's all that matters. I don't think that we believe that; and I suppose we ought to know--we practice it. But these assumptions of what the other fellow believes--and have you noticed that some of that came up here--The assumption that the U.C.M.S., officially approves open-membership and that all churches that support United Society favor open-membership. Well, I think that is wrong. At least not all of them, for I have a slight relationship to one congregation of our people where this is not the case. Or, the assumption on the other side, that everybody who supports "independent missions" has thereby declared war on the United Society and would like to destroy it. I have some good friends that say that is not true.

How far can this agreement go before it can actually bring us together in union; I don't know. I do know that at Lund, Sweden, in August of 1952 there was a great Communion service. People talking all kinds of diverse language--we had a ritual for the communion--the ritual was read by the presiding officer in Swedish and we made the response in English, French, German, and I don't know how many other languages. The fact that I couldn't understand what a good many of these people were saying I hope did not prevent God from hearing them and understanding them. We went forward and knelt about an altar and I knelt there and here was a dark-skinned brother, who might not be able to worship with me or any other white person in our country in certain areas, but we could kneel there. On the other side was a bearded prelate of another church. We received the bread and the wine together and it is indescribable what that kind of experience does to you. So what? So we got up and went home and we are not united yet. That impresses me as the

kind of thing we are doing here. We agree in so much, but we are not going to unite. Not yet!

I would like to raise the question as to whether we have gotten to the real difficulty, or have we dodged it. Here is this matter, for example, of the ambiguity of what our difficulties are about. How essential are missionary methods? Well, we'll have to go a little farther on that. Is it true that theology--theological difficulties--are at the basis? Is it true, do you suppose, that what we have failed to observe among us is that our divisions may actually have come about in another way. In church history it has been true that divisions have arisen over other than theological matters and then theological issues have been brought in to justify the separation. In the history of the Church, for example, under Constantine the church became a territorial entity and infant baptism came about by edict of government; so, theologically, infant baptism has to be justified. Among our brethren of the "Churches of Christ," I am convinced that sociological and economic factors largely contributed to the emergence of that separate group. Now, they can prove to you that it is the use or the organ that is the real problem. What sociological factors, my brethren, are separating us, which we are trying to justify now? I think we need to look into that. Are we grappling with the real difficulty?

Here are some of the other things that can come up. I appreciate what John (Greenlee) said about this matter of consistency and "face-saving." I have run across this in ecumenical gatherings: a minister saying that this matter of Christian unity is all right, but if they begin shrinking the number of churches will I be one of the preachers without a pulpit? That is a very practical consideration. There are vested interests, and I use the term without any connotation of criticism. We do have colleges, and we do have agencies, and we do have missionary enterprises, and the big question is this: Who is going to get the dollar? If this church, which is supporting "independent missions" becomes "cooperative," what will happen to the dollars that went to the direct-support missionaries? And the reverse can be said. Now these factors are frequently not brought into the open, my brethren, but they exist. Or, what about the prestige? Heaven forbid, that I should admit that I have been wrong! That would cause some dissent.

I wonder if we have gotten around to thinking about the kind of unity that we want, After all, I am interested in this statement that cooperation is not essential to unity. I am inclined to agree with Jim Carr that both the

"cooperative" and the so-called "independent" methods of mission work are probably here to stay. Now, if we agree that they are here to stay, we are going to agree that "cooperative" churches will not send money over here; that independent churches will not send money over here? Are we progressing in the direction of the varieties of Baptists; there are many kinds of Baptist churches; will we have many kinds of Christian churches, the line of demarcation being where you send your missionary money? Is that unity? Well, let us think about it. I am not attempting to define it, but I believe that we need to think farther about the things which we are saying. Do we want a unity which will provide a free exchange of ministers and members? We are not very close to that certainly, are we--as John pointed out about this matter of the exchange of ministers, for example. Would it be too much, brethren, to say that at this stage we might agree to put a stop to the senseless and unsupported accusation against our brothers? That would be pretty radical, wouldn"t it? To say, "cooperative" equals "modernist," "Independent" equals "mossback"-- if we could just get beyond that point and find out something about what our brethren actually stand for; and, if possible, to allow that to speak for themselves. Could we go so far as to say that we will no longer steal churches? If we agree to that, this will tacitly admit that we do belong together. This kind of thing doesn't come up in a so-called "comity agreement." This would tacitly admit that we do belong together. I don"t know what we want, but I do say this, my brethren --that among the encouraging things that happened, one is this: We are able to come together here and meet to express our concerns. It is encouraging to note that we are to speak frankly about our differences without fighting about them. But, I sound this caution. Does this mean that we are already at or beyond the danger point of real separation? John mentioned the case of the husband and wife coming to the minister for counsel: you may have noticed, as publicized in Hollywood and I suppose goes on somewhere else, that this husband and wife may fight like cats and dogs until they are divorced and that they can be friends. Is that what has happened to us? Are we already divorced? Are we far enough apart that the points of friction have been reduced? Has this already happened? Did you note this--which struck me as significant--"let us have this convention and this other in alternate years, and let us invite the president of this convention to speak at this gathering, "etc. This assumes that, implicity, there are two conventions of two different groups, does it not? Perhaps we are already beyond the danger point, so that what we need is an extension of the "ecumenical movement" (or whatever you may want to call it) into relations of ourselves. So, our problems may not be so much <u>Internal</u> unity, after all. Is this what we are

dealing with? I do not answer these questions, my brethren, they are for all of us to answer.

Let me say that my experience is that getting together is a good thing, but we have to be together long enough to get the feel of each other's thinking, to become emotionally so adjusted that we trust each other and can speak freely without rancor or enmity before we can come up with anything that looks constructive. I agree heartily that we need at least one more gathering, and it may be the first in a series. Let me say that I hope that these gatherings will not grow into officialism. If they do, we might just as well quit before we have a third North American or International Convention. We have enough of those already to satisfy all practical needs. I suggest this final brief work: Let us start where we are with the conviction which we share that unity is essential to the true nature of the Church. The unity of the church which God gave us in Jesus Christ is the unity which He gave the church. We will not create that unity, my brethren, by resolving that we will submit ourselves, our organizations, all that we have, to the will of Christ Who is the Head of the Church and in Whom this unity must be realized.

CLOSING PRAYER

James Carr

Heavenly Father, Thou hast united us to Thyself through the great expense of Calvary's Cross, the redemption which we have through Christ Jesus, Thy Son and our Lord. We are united to one another by virtue of this experience which we have shared. We have been ignorant too long of how to express this oneness in a practical way. We come penitently asking Thy forgiveness for any bitterness, any dissension, any divisive, schismatic attitudes or actions of which we have been guilty. We pray, Thy divine providential guidance and strength as we move from this moment toward a progressive practical unity of our brotherhood. We pray, Father, that thus we may have a message and a demonstration which will make its contribution to the Church at large; and this may become, ultimately, a fulfillment of thine own hope for mankind in an eternal and universal fellowship of those who belong to Thee. Bless us and go with us and strengthen us for the fulfilling of thy purposes in us, we pray, through Christ our Lord. Amen

CONSULTATION ON INTERNAL UNITY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES
(Meeting at Friends U.,Wichita,Ks.,June 2-3,1959)

Participants:

Moderator; Ting Champie, University Place Christian Church, Enid, Oklahoma

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14,630